

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Under pressure from Washington, Iran says it will suspend uranium conversion

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## Utah miners fighting for union win back pay for 9-month strike

### Co-Op miners plan delegation to Denver to press labor board to set date for union vote

BY KATHERINE BENNETT

HUNTINGTON, Utah—“We are winning back pay for our illegal firings last year from the Co-Op mine,” said Juan Salazar, responding to questions by reporters November 14.

Salazar, a coal miner, is a leader of the struggle here to establish representation by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) at the mine operated by C.W. Mining.

He and other miners said they received word of a back pay order from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), through a November 2 letter the board sent to the UMWA. The letter outlines a proposed settlement for back pay by the company to 47 miners, amounting to a total of more than \$400,000.

“Now we have to make sure 100 percent of all the miners receive a justified amount of back pay,” Salazar said.

C.W. Mining fired 75 miners at Co-Op Sept. 22, 2003, after the bosses got wind of the workers’ union-organizing efforts. The miners turned the lockout into a strike,

set up picket lines, and won widespread labor solidarity across the United States and beyond.

As the strike entered its 10th month in June, the NLRB ruled that the miners had been fired illegally, acting on a complaint filed by the UMWA on the miners’ behalf. The board ordered the company to give the workers their jobs back and included a provision for back pay for lost wages and benefits during the strike. Strikers who accepted the company’s unconditional offer to return were back on the job in July.

The labor board also ruled that a union election must be held in the mine because a large majority of the miners had signed a petition asking for representation by the UMWA. Months later, however, the NLRB has yet to set the date for a union election.

“We must put more pressure on the labor board,” said Jesús Leyva, a Co-Op miner. He reported that the miners are organizing a delegation to Denver, Colorado, December 3 to protest outside the NLRB’s

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## Meat packers in Toronto reject bosses’ ‘final offer,’ continue strike

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—In a November 13 vote, members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 175 who struck Quality Meat Packers and Toronto Abattoirs Ltd. (QMP) two weeks earlier rejected the company’s so-called final offer. Two-thirds of the 570 workers in the plant took part in the vote, turning down the employer’s proposal 200 to 180. The “final offer” was almost the same as the one rejected by 75 percent of the workers at a union meeting held October 28.

Strikers report that since the walkout began no production has taken place at the slaughterhouse, which processes up to 6,000 hogs a day.

“They nailed us to the wall in the last contract. They took 40 percent of our pay and benefits,” said George Chabiras, a maintenance worker with 17 years in the plant. “They say the company will close, but they just revamped the whole cutting room and

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## French troops gun down dozens in Ivory Coast

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

French imperialist forces appear to have put down unrest for now in the Ivory Coast, their former prize colony in West Africa, although Paris remains unable to patch together a stable client regime. Gen. Henri Bentegeat, chair of the French joint chiefs of staff, tried to deflect outrage against news of French troops firing into crowds of protesters in Abidjan, the country’s economic hub, by labeling them “a pack of looters, rapists.”

The Ivory Coast government put the death toll at the hands of French forces at 62. The Red Cross estimated that more than 1,000 have been wounded.

Protests appear to have subsided after a week of standoffs between French armored columns and mass demonstrations. Ivorians had taken to the streets in response to the destruction of the country’s air force by French forces November 6 and Paris’s stationing of thousands of its soldiers near

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## U.S. troops wage war to destroy Baathists

After taking over Fallujah, occupation forces battle in Mosul, Ramadi, other Iraqi cities



Getty Images/Marco DiLauro

U.S. tank in war-torn center of Fallujah November 15, after U.S. and Iraqi troops routed organized units of Baathists and took control of city in Iraq’s “Sunni Triangle.”

BY SAM MANUEL

U.S. troops overran Fallujah November 15, after a week-long ground offensive against organized units of Baathists, remnants of the best forces of the former regime of Saddam Hussein. About 15,000 Marines were involved in the assault, advancing section by section and calling in air strikes as they encountered resistance. The U.S. forces destroyed large parts of the city in the process, damaged its infrastructure, and didn’t spare the minarets of a number of mosques.

As fighting in Fallujah subsided, the U.S. military sent a second battalion of Marines to nearby Ramadi for similar operations and waged battles against Baathists in Baquba and Suwaira in the area, as well as Mosul

and Kirkuk in the north.

This represents a full-scale war by U.S. forces to wipe out the units of the Baathist army that dissolved last year but hid weapons and ammunition and have used

U.S. TROOPS OUT NOW!

— editorial, p. 10

the Sunni-dominated cities in central Iraq as bases to attack the U.S.-led occupation forces. It’s the unfinished war from last year’s invasion, when the government of Turkey did not allow U.S. troops to use

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## Cuban volunteers help Grenada repair storm-ravaged electric grid

BY CINDY JAQUITH

A contingent of Cuban internationalist volunteers has been serving on the island of Grenada since October, helping restore electric power to towns, homes, and other buildings severely damaged by Hurricane Ivan in September of this year. The storm destroyed or devastated 90 percent of buildings on the Caribbean island, including 70 percent of hotel rooms, vital to the country’s economy. Thirty-nine people died.

“The Cubans have made a tremendous difference,” Terry Marryshow told the *Militant* in a November 17 telephone interview from St. Georges, Grenada’s capital. Marryshow is a representative of the Maurice Bishop and October 19th Martyrs Foundation. The foundation was established after the Oct. 19, 1987, counterrevolutionary coup in Grenada, in which then-prime minister Maurice Bishop and other government leaders were murdered.

Marryshow said the island’s electrical lines were “almost totally devastated” by the hurricane. They are being repaired by Cuban volunteers who display “a very strong work ethic,” he said.

“From six o’clock in the morning until late in the evening you see them on the road putting up new poles and electric lines. They’re also salvaging old lines and using them rather than new ones where possible,” Marryshow noted.

“They display a large Cuban flag on

their trucks so everyone can see who they are. People receive them quite warmly,” he continued.

According to the Cuban daily *Juventud Rebelde*, the electrical workers are veterans of the hurricane recovery efforts in Cuba, restoring service in less than ten days to seven provinces in Cuba that lost power after Hurricane Ivan hit.

Marryshow was not aware of any contingents from the United States, Britain,

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Militant/John Steele

Workers picket Quality Meat Packers in Toronto, Ontario, November 15.

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# Cuban electricians help repair storm damage in Grenada

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France, or Germany coming to aid Grenada in the aftermath of the hurricane. He did note that the government of Venezuela headed by President Hugo Chávez has sent soldiers to help the Grenadians in the cleanup of debris and the construction of new buildings. According to the Cuban news agency Agencia de Información Nacional (AIN), the Cuban internationalist workers held a ceremony in October in St. Georges. The Cuban ambas-

sador to Grenada, Humberto Rivero, told the volunteers that “the spirit of combat... has always characterized the Cuban people in difficult battles,” reported AIN.

“The Grenadian population was waiting anxiously for the Cuban contingent,” the news agency reported, “due to the prestige gained by the Cuban collaborators in that Caribbean nation and in particular the Cuban workers during the construction of the Point Salines Airport.”

In 1979, the Grenadian toilers, under the leadership of Maurice Bishop and the New Jewel Movement, overthrew the despotic regime of Eric Gairy and placed a workers and farmers government in power.

Cuba provided unconditional aid to the Grenada revolution from the beginning. Particularly noteworthy were the efforts of Cuban construction workers to build a new airport at Point Salines.

In 1983, a counterrevolutionary faction of the New Jewel Movement—led by Bernard Coard—overthrew the workers and farmers government, assassinating Bishop and other revolutionary leaders. The U.S. government immediately seized on this devastating blow to Grenada’s working people to prepare an invasion of the island. Despite the defeat of the revolution and the imminent assault by



Intercontinental Press/Flax Hermes

**Cuban and Grenadian workers march in St. Georges, Grenada, May 1, 1980, when workers and farmers government led by Maurice Bishop was in power.**

Washington, the Cuban government decided the construction workers would remain and continue building the airport, as a commitment to the Grenadian toilers.

The overwhelming majority of Cubans in Grenada at the time were civilians, half of them over 40 years of age. The construction workers at the airport were instructed by the Cuban leadership to engage the U.S. soldiers only if they were attacked. When the U.S. soldiers did open fire, the Cuban workers responded and stood their ground as long as possible.

U.S. Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf later said that what “started as a highly unconventional, surgical in nature operation went sour right away... because of the assumption the Cubans weren’t going to fight.” Despite the overthrow of the revolution and Washington’s invasion, the Cuban government has continued to offer unconditional

aid to the island. Prior to dispatching the electrical workers contingent this fall, Cuba had a contingent of doctors, engineers, and architects working at St. Georges General Hospital.

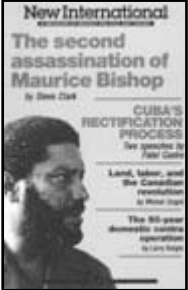
The Maurice Bishop and October 19th Martyrs Foundation commemorates the Grenada revolution each year on the anniversary of the coup. This year, Marryshow reported, he was the featured speaker at a tribute to Bishop and the other fallen leaders held at Fort George, formerly known as Fort Rupert.

On Oct. 19, 1983, about 30,000 Grenadians took to the streets, freed Bishop from house arrest, and marched to Fort Rupert, where they convinced many soldiers to turn over their weapons. Troops loyal to the Coard faction arrived and opened fire on the crowd, however, and then executed Bishop and the other revolutionary leaders.

## The Second Assassination of Maurice Bishop in New International no. 6.

by Steve Clark

“Maurice Bishop and Bernard Coard personified two irreconcilable political courses for the Grenada revolution,” Clark writes, one rooted in the revolutionary continuity of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, the other in Stalinist counterrevolution. Also includes “Cuba’s Rectification Process” by Fidel Castro and “The 50-year Domestic Contra Operation” by Larry Seigle. \$15



## Maurice Bishop Speaks; The Grenada Revolution, 1979-83



Speeches and interviews by the central leader of the workers and farmers government in the Caribbean island of Grenada. \$24.95

BY SAM MANUEL

Fred Shuttlesworth announced his resignation as president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference November 10. His departure follows that of Martin Luther King III, who quit as president of the group last year. At its convention this summer, Shuttlesworth agreed to serve as SCLC’s interim president for one year after delegates failed to elect any of the announced candidates. According to the Associated Press, police were called in as factions fought bitterly during the election process.

Noting that the group has ceased being seen as effectively fighting for the rights of

Blacks, Shuttlesworth told the *Cincinnati Enquirer* that as far as civil rights are concerned, “We talk about it at meetings, but it’s been a tradition that we talk more and do less.” He expressed little hope in a revival of the organization, saying in a two-page resignation letter, “only God can give life to the dead.”

Shuttlesworth’s departure comes amidst charges and countercharges of mismanagement, financial irresponsibility, and misuse of funds, and a substantial membership decline that has marked the decades-long leadership struggle in the SCLC. “For years, deceit, mistrust and a lack of spiritual discipline and truth have eaten away at the core of this once-hallowed organization,” said Shuttlesworth’s statement. He told the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* that the leadership struggle in SCLC had brought the 47-year-old group to “the low point in its history.”

Shuttlesworth, along with Martin Luther King Jr., was among the founding leaders of SCLC, as the organization is popularly known. From its beginning in 1957, the SCLC was the most prominent organization in the civil rights movement through the 1960s in the fight to overthrow a system of government-sanctioned segregation against Blacks in the southern United States.

Shuttlesworth was also a founding leader of the Alabama Christian Movement for



**Civil rights leader Fred Shuttlesworth speaks in Cincinnati, Ohio, April 14, 2001, during widespread protests against killing by cops of Timothy Thomas, a 19-year-old African American.**

Human Rights in 1956 and served as the organization’s president until 1969. Along with the SCLC, the group spearheaded the “Battle of Birmingham,” a campaign of protests and civil disobedience in the spring of 1963 that successfully challenged racial segregation in schools and other public facilities in Birmingham, Alabama.

# THE MILITANT

## Find out about Utah miners’ fight for union

*After a 10-month strike, Co-Op miners in Huntington, Utah, returned to work July 12 and have continued the battle for the union from inside. From day one of the strike the ‘Militant’ has given weekly coverage to this important labor struggle. New subscribers can get two back issues of their choice to find out more about it. Don’t miss a single issue!*



Co-Op miners Celso Panduro (right) and Bill Estrada being interviewed by TV Channel 5 News November 4 in Salt Lake City, Utah.

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# Tehran to suspend uranium enrichment

BY CINDY JAQUITH

With the threat of a tightening economic squeeze and military probes by Washington hanging over its head, the Iranian government agreed November 14 to suspend all uranium enrichment activity, a process necessary to produce fuel for the generation of nuclear power.

The agreement came after negotiations a week earlier between Tehran and the governments of France, Germany, and Britain. The talks almost collapsed as Tehran reportedly pushed for an exemption on an early step in the uranium conversion process and for promises that the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) would close its file on Iran. Representatives of the European Union Three, as the three imperialist governments negotiating with Tehran are referred to, rejected these proposals.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the three warned the Iranian government they would back Washington's call for referring Iran's nuclear energy program to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions. Such a step could have been taken at the next IAEA board of governors meeting, scheduled for November 25 in Vienna. Washington would use that as an opening for further punitive measures against Tehran.

Faced with this pressure, Tehran agreed to a temporary suspension of its nuclear fuel production process to buy more time. "Iran is planning to suspend uranium conversion activities beginning November 22," said Hassan Rohani, chief negotiator of the Iranian government, in a November 14 televised news conference in Tehran. Rohani

said his government's understanding is that the suspension is temporary and would last for months. "The Europeans told us it was not a matter of many years but of several months," he said.

The Iranian government also said that there is no set timetable in its agreement with the EU Three. It said that it has agreed to maintain the suspension of all uranium conversion indefinitely, as long as negotiations last over a more long-term accord.

The day after the deal was announced, the IAEA issued a preliminary report prior to its upcoming board meeting in Vienna. According to the *Guardian*, the report says that none of the nuclear material Iran has declared to UN inspectors has been diverted to weapons programs, but that the IAEA cannot rule out the existence of covert activities. The IAEA reportedly endorsed Tehran's agreement with the EU Three.

The IAEA has been snooping on Iran's nuclear program for more than two years, based on U.S. charges that Tehran is secretly trying to develop nuclear weapons.

Tehran has argued that it needs to develop nuclear power to meet the country's growing energy needs, and has pointed out that uranium enrichment is necessary to produce nuclear fuel. Iran has its own uranium mines, government officials have said. They have argued that it would be more costly and would make Tehran dependent on adversaries to drop its enrichment and import nuclear fuel from abroad.

After initially refusing UN demands, Tehran agreed in October 2003 to allow unannounced UN inspections of its nuclear facilities



Reuters

Monitoring room of nuclear power plant under construction in Bushehr, Iran.

ties and to voluntarily cease uranium enrichment. Subsequently, in July of this year, it resumed the uranium conversion process, arguing that the European governments had failed to keep their promise to have Iran's case before the IAEA dismissed.

With the November 14 agreement, "We'll begin immediately to send our people and inspectors [to Iran] so we can verify that commitment," IAEA spokesman Mark Gwozdecky told CNN.

The text of the agreement released November 15 states that Iran reaffirms "it

does not and will not seek to acquire nuclear weapons" and that it will "extend its suspension to include all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities.... the IAEA will be notified of this suspension and invited to verify and monitor it." Tehran has announced the suspension will be complete three days before the IAEA board meets.

In return for Iran suspending uranium enrichment, the agreement states that Tehran will begin talks with Paris, Berlin, and London on "nuclear, technological, and economic cooperation and firm commitment on security issues." Specifically, "The [EU Three] will actively support the opening of Iranian accession negotiations at the WTO [World Trade Organization]."

The agreement concludes that the EU Three and Iran "confirm their continued support for the political process in Iraq aimed at establishing a constitutionally elected government." It also underlines "their determination to combat terrorism, including the activities of al Qaeda and other terrorist groups such as the Mujaheddin-e Khalq." The latter is an armed group that seeks to overthrow the Iranian government.

According to the *Washington Post*, unnamed U.S. diplomats said in response to the new agreement that Washington would "pursue a toughly worded resolution against Iran that included more aggressive IAEA inspections and an automatic referral to the Security Council if Tehran breaks any part of the European deal."

"We don't want Iran to have a nuclear weapon and we're working toward that end," said U.S. president George Bush in a November 12 joint news conference with visiting UK prime minister Anthony Blair.

## ETA leaders call for end to armed struggle

BY CINDY JAQUITH

Six imprisoned activists of the Basque pro-independence group ETA have issued a letter urging the organization to end its strategy of armed struggle. Excerpts of the letter, which appeared in the Spanish daily *Diario de Noticias*, were reported November 3 by the *Financial Times* and *International Herald Tribune*.

"Our military-political strategy has been overtaken by the repression of the enemy we face," the letter said. "This armed fight that we are carrying out these days is not working.

"We have never in the history of the organization been in such bad shape. You can't carry on an armed fight through warnings and by uttering threats that are never fulfilled.

"Our political potential and capital is there, and we must exploit it in all its facets," the letter, which is dated August 2004, added. Its authors called for an "institutional" campaign for the "masses," in collaboration with left-wing nationalist parties in the Basque country. One of the signers is Francisco Múgica Garmendia, whom the Spanish government has labeled as ETA's top leader.

There are some 600 Basque political prisoners in Spanish and French jails today. The Basques, an oppressed nationality with its own culture, language, and geographical area, number 3 million people, living both in Spain and France. They suffered brutal repression under the fascist regime of Gen. Francisco Franco in Spain. When that regime was replaced by a bourgeois democratic government in the mid-1970s, mass mobilizations of Basques won some measure of autonomy, but never self-determination.

Persecution continued, particularly between 1982 and 1996, under the Socialist Party (PSOE) government of Felipe González.

ETA stands for Euskadi ta Askatasuna—Basque Homeland and Freedom. It was formed in 1959. ETA calls for the right to an independent Basque state. In the late 1960s, ETA adopted a strategy of kidnapping and killing government officials and prominent figures.

The March 11, 2004, bombing of three trains in Madrid—killing more than 200 people and wounding at least 1,500 others—was quickly blamed by the Spanish government on ETA, despite that group's denial of any responsibility. The government organized demonstrations throughout the country against "terrorism" that drew more than 7 million people. Helping build the massive turnout were the two main trade union federations—the Workers'

Commissions, led by the Communist Party, and the General Workers Union, led by the Socialist Party. Both union federations also blamed ETA for the train bombings the day they occurred.

The Spanish government arrested about a dozen men it claimed were responsible for the bombing—none of them Basques. Nonetheless, immediately following his election, Spanish prime minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero of the Socialist Party, declared, "ETA is not going to get a minute's rest." Zapatero rejected an offer from the ETA leadership for talks.

"After the terrible March 11 massacre, anything that ETA does will look feeble," stated Kepia Aulestia, a former ETA member. According to the *Financial Times*, Aulestia "now advocates a political solution to the conflict."

The conclusions now publicized by what appears to be a growing section of

ETA's leadership are similar to those that led the Irish Republican Army (IRA) to end its armed struggle against the British occupation of northern Ireland a decade ago.

The IRA announced a cease-fire in 1994. Its leadership backed the process that led, four years later, to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement between the Republican Sinn Fein, pro-British loyalists in Northern Ireland, London, and Dublin. The agreement provided for limited self-rule of the north and Sinn Fein's participation in the political process.

In the Basque areas, however, any political process that could lead to some form of autonomy does not appear to be on the agenda at the moment. Last year, Madrid banned Herri Batasuna, the main pro-independence political party. The group won 10 percent of the vote in Basque country in the 2001 elections.

## French troops gun down dozens in Ivory Coast

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the residence of Ivorian president Laurent Gbagbo.

Bentegat told French television that "We had to fire warning shots and we could indeed have wounded or killed a few people."

Paris's scare campaign has been aided by media accounts of "mob unrest" against Europeans in Ivory Coast. "More than 2,000 foreigners—some of whom have been plucked by French helicopters from their besieged homes—have flown out of Abidjan in the last two days," said a November 12 Reuters news dispatch.

Soon after the outbreak of the conflict the French government decided to evacuate thousands of its 14,000 citizens who live in this country of 17 million. Other imperialist powers have done the same. Harkening back to colonial times, the Labour Party government of Prime Minister Anthony Blair in London has even dispatched Nepalese Gurkha troops to guard citizens of the United Kingdom in Ivory Coast.

Some of those evacuated from the country have described the brutality of French forces against the population. "Witnesses said French helicopters fired on demonstrators," said the Associated Press, which quotes one small businessman from the United States as saying, "Man, we heard of a lot of Ivorian friends dying" at the hands of French troops.

Other evacuees spoke with colonial arrogance. "It's my country," Natalie Coppati told the *Los Angeles Times* while waiting at

the Abidjan airport for a flight to France. The *Times* presented her as one of the evacuees who had "made their lives and fortunes in this West African country." Her family came to Ivory Coast in 1949, when it was still a colony, and struck it rich in the cocoa and coffee business.

The first week in November the French government increased its troop strength to 5,000 in Ivory Coast after Ivorian planes bombed a French army camp in the opposition-held city of Bouaké in the north. Nine French troops and one U.S. citizen died in the attack. Within hours French fighter planes destroyed most of Ivory Coast's military aircraft.

Working with the French occupation, the United Nations has maintained 6,240 "peacekeepers" in Ivory Coast. On November 6, the UN Security Council authorized these forces "to use all necessary means to carry out" its instructions.

In September 2002, after a failed coup attempt against the Ivorian government, a civil war began. Thousands have been killed since and more than 1 million people driven from their homes. Paris expanded its military presence in Ivory Coast to 2,500 soldiers to shore up the government, and Washington sent in 200 Special Forces troops.

The New Forces, the principal anti-government militia, accuses the Gbagbo government of repression and discrimination against Muslims and immigrants in the north. After the regime proved incapable of putting down the revolt and securing conditions for continued exploitation of

the country's resources, Paris shifted its stance and has tried to broker a power-sharing arrangement.

The Gbagbo regime reignited the civil war November 4 when it ordered bombing raids against Bouaké and Korhogo. At the same time the government cut off electricity, water, and telephone services in all opposition-held territory. International relief agencies warned that after more than a week of these conditions there was a danger of a cholera outbreak. The BBC reported that these services had been restored November 12.

The UN Security Council voted unanimously for a 13-month arms embargo against Ivory Coast the day after a November 15 emergency session of the African Union on the conflict called for the action as well. "We welcome the embargo, even though it was late in coming," said a spokesperson for the opposition in Ivory Coast.

French imperialism's domination of the country is based on its control of key sectors of the economy and infrastructure, including electricity, water, and telecommunications. According to the French embassy in Abidjan, 60 percent of the country's tax revenue comes from French-owned companies.

Washington is closely watching the developments in Ivory Coast, ready to gain from the woes of its rival in Paris as it continues to expand U.S. influence in the region. U.S. corporations, for example, have been among the heaviest investors in the growing African oil industry.

# Toronto meat packers

**Continued from front page**

spent millions on new equipment. If we stay out longer, we'll get a better offer."

The main demand of the strikers is for a higher wage increase than the one offered by the company. Depending on job classification, the proposed increase ranges from Can\$1.15 to Can\$1.75 (US\$1 = Can\$1.19) over three years. In the previous contract, signed six years ago, workers took a double-digit cut in wages after an eight-week strike that failed to push back company concession demands.

The latest company effort to intimidate workers into ending the strike began with a November 10 letter delivered to workers' homes by special courier, implying the company would close if the strike continued.

"We find ourselves in a very unfortunate and dangerous situation," said the letter, addressed to "Dear Valued Employee." "Customers and hog producers are now preparing to make other long-term arrangements. The longer the strike continues, the higher the risk to the company and your jobs. We have told you that while you are on strike, your jobs and production volumes are going to employees of our competitors... We have no choice but to make decisions about the long-term future of the facility and the business."

Signed by QMP owner David Schwartz, it said the company would submit its "final offer to your negotiating committee on Friday, November 12, 2004." Schwartz said the offer "would not improve" because "there is no more money to offer." The company's proposal was basically the same the workers had rejected originally, minus a \$500 signing bonus the employers had promised if the contract was ratified by October 28.

Over the two evenings that followed, a number of workers reported receiving anonymous phone calls that either threatened them or urged them to accept the offer. The anonymous caller to Sam Cataeno, UFCW plant chairperson at QMP, stated angrily: "Look you f... union goon. Better watch your back. The vote better go the right way because we all have families to feed." Cataeno said his 11-year old daughter, who picked up the phone, heard the message.

On November 11 union officials from the Local 175 provincial office distributed a leaflet to strikers that informed them that the company would present its final offer to the negotiating committee the next day. The leaflet added that "Quality Meats advised the Union that acceptance or rejection of this

offer will decide the future of the plant."

Voting was organized to take place at a hotel from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with two informational meetings held during the day, which took place as workers voted. Workers received the one-page "final offer" when they registered for their ballots.

Throughout the day the lobby at the hotel where the vote was held was a beehive of activity as the unionists stayed around to discuss the contract. Workers stepped forward to help translate the final offer in different languages, and debate the pros and cons of accepting or rejecting it.

The count took place shortly after 5:00 p.m. and the results were announced to a room full of workers, many of whom had been there for hours or had come back to hear the results after voting that morning.

"I'm happy that we aren't going to settle for a second-rate contract," D.D., a shipper/receiver with five years' seniority, told the *Militant* as he left the meeting, giving congratulatory handshakes to other strikers.

Local media have not reported on the strike so far, except for a Portuguese-language community television station.

Individual workers from other unions have passed by and expressed support. The most significant act of solidarity has come from workers at the giant UFCW-organized Maple Leaf Foods hog slaughterhouse in Burlington, Ontario. According to the chief steward, kill floor workers have refused Saturday work to kill hogs diverted from QMP to Maple Leaf. The more than 1,000 Maple Leaf Foods workers adopted a contract several months ago without a strike. The QMP bosses claim that their "final offer" is better than the deal accepted by Maple Leaf workers, which up to now has generally set the pattern for QMP contracts.

*John Steele is a member of UFCW Local 175, on strike against Quality Meat Packers.*

## N.Y. electrical workers strike to defend union jobs



Militant/Wallie Carter

NEW YORK—Electrical workers are on strike in New York and New Jersey against attempts by five light fixture manufacturers to outsource their jobs.

These members of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 3 work under a master agreement that covers 10 shops, that together employ more than 500 workers in the lighting industry in the two states. After four months of negotiations on their expired contract, on November 8 union members struck five plants, which employ about 300 workers. The other firms in the bargaining unit agreed to a new contract that prohibits outsourcing of jobs.

"We need a raise and we need better benefits," Adeila Orozco, an assembler with 16 years seniority at Linear Lighting in Long Island City, told the *Militant*. Wages at this plant range from \$8 per hour to \$18 per hour.

"I've been on strike before," said Abdul Rashid, who has 15 years seniority at the same plant. "The company wants to make more money by eliminating our jobs and having the work done cheaper elsewhere." Rashid reported that 10 union members had crossed the line at Linear Lighting.

Workers said that two struck companies began negotiations on November 13. Picket lines at one of the firms, Edison Price Lighting, were taken down when negotiations began. Tony Esponda, a union shop steward at Edison, said that the company has hired a professional strike-breaking firm to recruit scabs and pick them up in vans and drive them through the line every morning.

—DAN FEIN

## Utah miners win NLRB back pay ruling

**Continued from front page**

regional office there, pressing the board to set a date for a union vote. They will also present the UMWA's demand that no members of the Kingston family, the owners of C.W. Mining, or supervisory personnel be allowed to vote.

"This trip to Denver is something we've got to do," said Leyva. "The company is

already on the defensive and now we have to push the right buttons to get what we want."

The NLRB held a hearing in Price, Utah, in July to determine who will be eligible to vote.

In an attempt to stack the elections against the UMWA, the company submitted a list of about 100 people, mostly

Kingston family members and relatives, including office and managerial personnel, who are on the company's payroll as part-time or seasonal help. Some also work full time alongside approximately four dozen miners who are mostly immigrants from Mexico.

Those on the company's list include members of the International Association of United Workers Union (IAUWU), which miners say is a company union that has never represented them.

The attorney for the UMWA and its supporters at the Co-Op mine argued at the hearing that the relatives of the Kingston family employed in the mine derive benefits not available to other miners, and their direct connection to the owners represents a conflict of interest. For this reason, the UMWA and its supporters have argued that these individuals should not be allowed to take part in a representation election.

The miners are organizing to get the word out on the December 3 protest in Denver throughout Emery and Carbon counties in Utah—the heart of the state's coal production.

The Co-Op miners said they are planning a meeting at the UMWA hall in Price with retired miners and others who want to help organize support for this action. The meeting will take place on Saturday, November 20. Another meeting is planned for the next day for Co-Op miners who support the UMWA to discuss how to fight to ensure that the bosses pay what is due every miner in back wages.

The Co-Op miners said they are asking that letters be sent to the NLRB demanding the board set a date for the election and backing the UMWA's demand on who should be eligible to take part in the vote. Such letters should be sent to NLRB Region 27, attention B. Allan Benson, director, 600 17th Street, 7th Floor—North Tower, Denver, CO 80202-5433. Tel: (303) 844-3551; Fax: (303) 844-6249.

Copies of the letters and other messages of solidarity and financial donations for the organizing struggle can be sent to the Co-Op Miners at: UMWA District 22, 525 East, 100 South, Price, UT 84501. Tel: (435) 637-2037; Fax: (435) 637-9456.

## Workers at Massachusetts textile plant end strike, accept concession contract

**BY LAURA GARZA**

FALL RIVER, Massachusetts—After six weeks on the picket line, workers at Duro Finishing voted November 10 to accept a contract offer from the company by a vote of 120 to 62. Expressing the sentiment of many, one worker said it was "a lousy package but we need to get back to work."

Tony Melo, a member of the negotiating committee, said he thought the union had accomplished something with the strike, pushing back some of the company's initial demands. "We hurt the company bad," he said, but the workers were faced with "the company threatening to bring in scabs."

The textile workers, who are members of Local 1226T of UNITE HERE, struck when the company pushed a contract that included hiking the payments workers would make for health insurance and eliminating a guarantee of a 40-hour work week, replacing it with the "flexibility" to run three shifts in the plant for only four, or in some cases, only three days a week.

Explaining why they had unanimously rejected the initial company offer, Ronald Melanson, one of the 190 workers in the walkout, said, "We want to go ahead, not back in time. We don't want to go back to work for less money, which is what this would amount to."

Five weeks into the strike and facing solid opposition by the workers to its proposals, the company stepped up pressure on the workers to settle. It sent all union members a letter signed by CEO Larry Himes, threatening the company would begin hiring new people to take their jobs. The bosses also placed a large want ad in

the Fall River *Herald News*.

The company had succeeded in reaching a contract settlement with the local in an adjacent plant, the Duro print shop. With the contract for the 100 unionists there due to expire at the end of October, the company offered them a sweetened version of what had been turned down by the Duro Finishing plant workers. It included a bigger raise, workers said, of 50 cents an hour the first year and 30 cents for the next two years. It also introduced a demand for workers to pay a substantial percentage of their health-care coverage—12 percent the first year and 20 percent for each of the next two years.

Workers from the striking local gathered outside the union hall on the first day of the vote by the print workers, asking them to hold off on voting for the offer, or to reject it, so the two locals could face the company together. The print shop local rejected the first offer in a 37-33 vote. Several workers said they viewed the company's offer of a \$150 signing bonus as a bribe to get them to settle before the striking local, putting more pressure on their fellow union members.

The next week the company offered the print workers basically the same contract they'd rejected, but added the proviso that if the striking Duro Finishing local won better terms these would automatically be added to the print shop contract. Print workers passed this contract October 31 by a vote of 57 to 16.

The company then offered the strikers a slightly improved package, including a raise of 47 cents the first year, and a demand for payments of 13 percent on insur-

ance the first year, and 20 percent the next two years. This was voted down 178 to 1. Steve Holmes, one of the strikers, said he voted no because, "They still want to stick on the 32 hours and the health care. At the end of three years, we'd be paying \$80!"

This reporter talked to union members at the Chace Street plant gate who had just received the company letter, and were discussing the challenge that would be posed if the company did try to bring scabs in. Some said it's not legal to stop scabs from entering the plant, while others said the best way to stop them is to have large numbers of people at the picket lines. A delegation of workers from UNITE HERE Local 377 in New Bedford visited the Chace Street picket line to deliver \$115 from a plant collection and to extend solidarity.

In the wake of the threats to bring in scabs, the union negotiating committee asked for another meeting with the bosses. The new company offer, which was the one unionists accepted November 10, includes a raise of 50 cents an hour the first year of a three-year deal, and 30 cents for each of the next two years. Under the terms of the agreement, the company may run up to six 32-hour workweeks every three months. Union members will now pay 12 percent of the cost of their health insurance, which is \$20.15 per week, and 20 percent the next two years of the contract. New hires will pay 20 percent from the start.

*Laura Garza is a member of UNITE HERE Local 377 in New Bedford. Sarah Ullman, a garment worker in Fall River, contributed to this article.*



# One week, 341 ‘Militant’ subs to go; All out to make goal!

BY PAUL PEDERSON

There is one week left in the *Militant/Perspectiva Mundial* subscription drive and a substantial task remains to meet the goals.

We need 341 subscriptions to hit the target of 2,300 *Militant* subscribers. For *PM*, 105 subscriptions are needed to meet the 550-subscription goal.

By organizing to be on a daily campaign footing, maximizing the opportunities to find new readers, this challenging gap can be closed in the final week.

In Newark, socialist workers have sold 13 *Militant* subscriptions going door-to-door in the neighborhood where the Pathfinder book center is located. “We have had great success with door-to-door sales,” Angel Lariscy, a Newark campaigner, reported. “We decided before going out campaigning that we were going to focus on why the elections didn’t change the fundamental questions facing working people. We’ve gotten a very good response.”

Lariscy said that in one large apartment complex, three campaigners sold eight subscriptions to the *Militant* on the November 13–14 weekend. “We’ve started to get recognized a little more from the Socialist Workers Party

election campaign,” she said. “At another table in downtown Newark the same day, we sold three subscriptions, one to a guy who had met us before and bought a single copy. A second person, who had already subscribed, came up to the table and bought a book.”

“These door-to-door sales have been a goldmine for us,” said Newark campaigner Nancy Rosenstock. “A young woman who works as a clerk answered the door at one building. She liked the idea of a working-class alternative to the capitalist parties in the elections. She especially liked what we had to say about workers’ need to use union power and to organize unions to resist the bosses’ attacks. She was home sick and her employer doesn’t provide health coverage, so she immediately identified with the points we made about the need to fight for universal health care. She signed up to subscribe and said she hoped to see us again.”

Newark campaigners have already gone over their local goal for the *Militant*. “Our focus now is on helping to make the international goal,” Lariscy said. “We want to see how many more we can get in the last weekend to help in this final push.”

In Sweden, supporters of the *Militant* have had good results so far as well, going two subscriptions over their goal of 30, with a week left in the effort.

“Throughout the campaign we’ve been setting up literature tables and doing street speaking on a range of topics, from the Cuban Revolution to the fight against Swedish imperialism’s domination of workers and farmers in the semicolonial world,” reported Adreas Bergerheim. “There’s been a big media campaign against Cuba recently, spearheaded by the leaders of the Liberal and Conservative parties. We’ve found a lot of interest in the Cuban Revolution on our tables. One person came up to us last week and said ‘Keep up the good work’ donating 50 Kroner (U.S. \$8.00) to help.

“A high school student signed up to subscribe after meeting us at one of these campaign tables and since



Militant/Brian Williams

**Selling the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and Pathfinder books November 6 at Louisiana Book Festival in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.**

then has begun working with us to arrange a speaking engagement for Arrin Hawkins at her school this week,” he continued. Hawkins, the SWP vice-presidential candidate in the U.S. elections, arrived in Stockholm November 17 for a speaking tour in Sweden. Bergerheim added that socialists in Sweden have been doing systematic door-to-door campaigning, and this has been a factor in their success so far. “We have been knocking on doors in neighborhoods all over Stockholm,” he said. “In one building, which houses mostly university students, we sold three subscriptions in one afternoon.”

Hawkins is slated to speak at two high schools and one university during her visit, as well as join the socialists in talking to workers at the gate of a large beer brewery in Stockholm. She will also speak at a Militant Labor Forum in that city on November 20, before returning to the United States.

Carrying out this kind of political work around the world in the remaining six days can make all the difference in a successful conclusion of the sub drive.

All subscriptions that arrive at the *Militant* business office by 10 p.m. Eastern Time, on Tuesday, November 23, will be counted in the final scoreboard.

All out to make the goal!

Militant/Perspectiva Mundial Fall Subscription Drive Aug. 28–Nov. 21: Week 11 of 12					
Country	Militant Goal	Sold	%	PM Goal	Sold
SWEDEN	30	32	107%	5	5
UNITED KINGDOM					
London	50	52	104%	12	9
Edinburgh	25	21	84%	2	0
UK total	75	73	97%	14	9
ICELAND	30	28	93%	2	0
AUSTRALIA	55	46	84%	8	4
NEW ZEALAND					
Auckland	45	45	100%	1	1
Christchurch	35	22	63%	1	0
N.Z. total	80	67	84%	2	1
CANADA					
Montreal	32	32	100%	12	6
Toronto	75	57	76%	18	5
CANADA total	107	89	83%	30	11
UNITED STATES					
Newark	90	96	107%	25	20
Houston	80	82	103%	20	12
Detroit	40	38	95%	10	10
Des Moines	65	60	92%	25	27
Tampa	40	36	90%	10	11
Craig, CO	65	57	88%	20	9
New York	180	156	87%	60	44
Seattle	55	48	87%	12	12
Cleveland	40	34	85%	10	5
Price, UT	50	42	84%	20	14
Chicago	100	82	82%	40	34
Atlanta	80	63	79%	20	12
Boston	100	78	78%	40	20
Pittsburgh	65	50	77%	4	2
Birmingham	40	30	75%	8	3
Omaha	55	40	73%	45	17
Los Angeles	150	104	69%	50	47
Washington	115	78	68%	21	16
Twin Cities	105	71	68%	40	29
Philadelphia	95	57	60%	10	0
Miami	100	59	59%	50	11
San Francisco	125	60	48%	35	17
NE Pennsylvania	55	24	44%	15	12
U.S. total	1890	1445	76%	590	384
14-day campaign*	-	179	-	-	31
Int'l totals	2235	1959	85%	670	445
Goal/Should be	2300	2108	92%	550	457
*14 days of campaigning in New York Aug. 21–Sept. 3 at protests and events leading up to and during the Republican convention					
IN THE UNIONS					
	Militant Goal	Sold	%	PM Goal	Sold
AUSTRALIA					
AMIEU	8	8	100%		
UNITED STATES					
UMWA	30	25	83%	12	6
UNITE	50	34	68%	40	22
UFCW	135	78	58%	150	87
Total	215	137	64%	202	115
CANADA					
UFCW	6	4	67%	3	2
UNITE	2	1	50%	1	0
Total	8	5	63%	4	2
NEW ZEALAND					
MWU	2	1	50%		
NDU	2	1	50%		
Total	4	2	50%		
SWEDEN					
Livs	2	1	50%	1	0
ICELAND					
Hlíf	2	1	50%		
Efling	2	1	50%		
Total	4	2	50%		

AMIEU—Australasian Meat Industry Employees’ Union; Livs—Food Workers Union; MWU—Meat Workers Union; NDU—National Distribution Union; UFCW—United Food and Commercial Workers; UMWA—United Mine Workers of America; Hlíf—Union of Unskilled Workers in Hafnarfjörður; Efling—Union of Unskilled Workers in Reykjavík.

## Contribute to Militant Fighting Fund

The following is a letter by Sam Manuel, director of the Militant Fighting Fund, sent to distributors and other readers of the *Militant* requesting their help in making the \$30,000 fund a success. As this issue went to press, \$10,046 has been collected out of total pledges of \$25,592. The timely support of every reader is essential for meeting the goal by the December 15 deadline.

November 13, 2004

Dear Reader,

On October 31, the *Militant* launched a Militant Fighting Fund to raise \$30,000 to help the socialist newsweekly defend itself against a harassment lawsuit filed against the paper by the owners of the Co-Op mine in Huntington, Utah.

The fund is off to a good start. So far, 240 people have contributed or made pledges amounting to \$25,462. We have set a December 15 deadline for raising the entire \$30,000.

On September 24, C.W. Mining and the International Association of United Workers Union, the company union at the Co-Op mine, launched a lawsuit against the United Mine Workers of America, 17 former and current Co-Op miners, and dozens of organizations and individuals who have supported the struggle by UMWA-backers at that mine to be represented by the union of their choice. In addition to the *Militant*, the 120 defendants include the *Salt Lake Tribune*, the *Deseret Morning News*, the *Price Sun- Advocate*, the Archbishop of Utah, the Salt Lake Archdiocese, the Socialist Workers Party and several dozen more.

Twenty-four of the lawsuit’s 76 pages consist of allegations that the *Militant*’s coverage on the more than one-year battle to bring the UMWA into the Co-Op mine contains defamations and libelous material.

The *Militant* has a proud record of covering this struggle since it started in September 2003. Fifty-three of the 58 issues of the paper printed since then have included articles on the miners’ struggle. We make no apolo-

gies for reporting accurately on the wages and working conditions facing workers at that mine, their efforts to reach out for solidarity, and how this battle fits into the broader struggle for unionization of the coalfields in the western United States.

Lawsuits like this one are designed to get the attention of those named away from the central issue, which is the UMWA’s organization of this mine.

This nuisance lawsuit is designed to tie up our time, drain us financially, and get us to back off our support. Far from being intimidated, the *Militant* is continuing its weekly coverage of the workers’ battle to organize this mine.

The \$30,000 Militant Fighting Fund will pay for retaining competent attorneys, the initial legal bills, and for mounting a public political defense.

Participants at the New York meeting on October 31, “Before the Vote: The Real Results of the U.S. Election Campaign,” [see article in November 16 *Militant*] helped get this fund off to an excellent start. Because of this, we have the possibility of going well over the \$30,000 goal.

We urge our distributors to reach out broadly to readers of the *Militant* in your area. Our goal should be to talk to every subscriber to the *Militant* and its sister Spanish-language monthly *Perspectiva Mundial*. Ask them to dig deeply to contribute to this fund.

Please have contributions sent to: The *Militant*, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, N.Y. 10018. Please write checks or money orders to *The Militant* and earmark them “Militant Fighting Fund.”

Fraternally,  
Sam Manuel  
Director, Militant Fighting Fund

### The Militant Fighting Fund

\$30,000  
Goal

\$25,592  
Pledged

\$10,046  
Collected



# Washington uses death of Yasir Arafat to press imperialist interests in the Mideast region

BY PAUL PEDERSON

In the wake of the death of Palestinian Liberation Organization chairman Yasir Arafat, Washington has renewed its push for the establishment of a nominal Palestinian state in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Building on the blows that Tel Aviv has dealt to armed groups resisting the Israeli occupation, Washington's move is part of its effort to ensure the long-term viability of Israel as a junior imperialist power in the region, walled off from the bulk of the Palestinian population.

Appearing at a news conference November 12 alongside British prime minister Anthony Blair, U.S. president George Bush said, "Prime Minister Blair and I also share a vision of a free, peaceful, a democratic broader Middle East. That vision must include a just and peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict based on two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security."

The U.S. rulers hope that Arafat's death has removed an obstacle to their goal of establishing an institution of Palestinian self-government with no continuity to the revolutionary nationalist movement that the PLO arose from (see article on this page)—one that will work with U.S. imperialism to keep a lid on Palestinian resistance. To that end, press reports have branded Arafat and the PLO during the height of the mass Palestinian national struggle in the 1960s and 70s as "the architects of modern terrorism," while expressing hope that his successors will usher in a new period of "peace"—on Tel Aviv and its imperialist backers' terms.

Pointing to the upcoming elections for Palestinian president, scheduled for January 9, Bush continued, "We look forward to working with a Palestinian leadership that is committed to fighting terror and committed to the cause of democratic reform. We'll mobilize the international community to help revive the Palestinian economy, to build up Palestinian security institutions to fight terror, to help the Palestinian government fight corruption, and to reform the Palestinian political system and build democratic institutions."

The new PLO chairman following Arafat's death, Mahmoud Abbas, had been appointed Palestinian Authority prime minister in March 2003 after Washington and Tel Aviv refused to deal with Arafat. Abbas resigned in September of that year after he failed to gain support within the Palestinian Authority for a crackdown against Hamas and other armed Palestinian groups. He was the chief representative for the PLO during negotiations that led to the 1993 Oslo accords.

Two days after being appointed PLO chairman, Abbas found himself dodging

bullets at a memorial service for Arafat. Some 40 armed men marched into a tent where Abbas was presiding over a memorial service and began firing their weapons, shouting, "Arafat Lives!" and "No to Abu Mazan [Abbas]! No to Dahlan!"

Mohammed Dahlan, the security chief for the Palestinian Authority, was one of the key officials under Arafat assigned to work closely with the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and the Israeli secret police to set up the Palestinian police in the occupied territories. He is well known for having a close relationship with former CIA director George Tenet.

The new Palestinian Authority prime minister, Ahmed Qurei, is similarly viewed with favor by Washington. Qurei, a wealthy banker, has held the post since Abbas resigned in 2003.

Bush also praised the Israeli government's so-called disengagement plan, pledging to "work with Israeli and Palestinian leaders to complete the disengagement plan from Gaza and part of the West Bank."

Under the cover of this plan, Tel Aviv has escalated its offensive against groups organizing armed resistance to the Israeli



Reuters photos by Gil Cohen Magen  
**Partial view of hundreds-mile-long "security barrier" separating the West Bank city of Abu Dis from Jerusalem (above) under construction by the Israeli government. The wall carves out additional Palestinian lands for annexation by Tel Aviv. Israeli soldier guards a section of the barrier (inset).**



occupation. The Israeli rulers have built more than one-third of a 420-mile wall, annexing a section of the West Bank to the largest Israeli settlement blocs and forcing the majority of the Palestinian population to the other side. At the same time, the Israeli government has honed its tool of targeted assassinations, killing hundreds of leaders and cadres of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and other armed Palestinian groups in the occupied territories.

"We seek a democratic, independent and viable state for the Palestinian people," Bush

added. "We are committed to the security of Israel as a Jewish state.... All that we hope to achieve together requires that America and Europe remain close partners."

Blair's presence at the press conference was part of the efforts by Washington to draw a number of European Union member states behind the U.S. rulers' course. Paris in particular has often been at odds with Washington's plans in the region, presenting itself as a greater friend of the Palestinian people in an effort to defend French imperialism's broader interests in the Middle East.

## The evolution of the Palestine Liberation Organization

BY PAUL PEDERSON

The crisis of leadership in the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is evident in the events surrounding the death of Palestinian Authority president Yasir Arafat. This crisis is rooted in the evolution of the PLO from a revolutionary nationalist movement to a force whose leadership has become increasingly bourgeoisified.

The PLO arose from the resistance to the establishment of the state of Israel on Palestinian territory in 1947. Backed by Washington, the Israeli government drove hundreds of thousands of Palestinians into exile and by 1948 had taken control of four-fifths of what had been Palestine.

In 1964 the PLO was established in Egypt as an umbrella organization of Palestinian nationalist groups. Its leader, Ahmed Shukairy, favored subordinating the PLO leadership to Gamal Abdel Nasser's bourgeois nationalist government in Egypt.

As Israeli aggression continued unchecked, many Palestinian militants were attracted to Fatah, an armed group led by Arafat that was part of the PLO. Instead of relying on the Arab regimes, Fatah took up arms against the Israeli government. In 1969, Arafat became chairman of the PLO.

The PLO at the time advanced a revolutionary program and course for national

liberation and the replacement of the state of Israel with a democratic, secular Palestine.

"Only the people of Palestine—its Jews, its Christians, its Muslims—in a country that combines them all is permanent," Fatah proclaimed in a 1970 document titled *Towards a Democratic State in Palestine*. In a democratic Palestine, "all the Jews, Muslims, and Christians living in Palestine or forcibly exiled from it will have the right to Palestinian citizenship," it said. "It is the belief of the revolution that the majority of the present Israeli Jews will change their attitudes and will subscribe to the new Palestine, especially after the oligarchic state machinery, economy, and military establishment are destroyed."

The revolutionary dynamic of the PLO threatened the Israeli rulers and the Arab regimes alike. Driven out of Jordan in 1970 by King Hussein, the PLO established its base in Lebanon. When the Israeli regime launched a war against Lebanon in 1982, some 9,000 PLO fighters were forced to withdraw from that country into exile in a number of Arab countries—one that would last for more than a decade. In the subsequent years of dispersion the gap grew between the PLO apparatus in exile, which in some countries had increasingly grown into a willing tool of the host government, and the Palestinian population in the occupied territories and refugee camps in the region. The PLO's political course became more and more removed from that of the front-line combatants inside "Greater Israel."

In 1987 a wave of struggles broke out in the occupied territories, led by a new, younger generation of fighters. This *intifada*, or uprising, drew fresh forces into the struggle, but did not succeed in forging a new leadership strong enough to provide a revolutionary alternative to the PLO apparatus.

The first Gulf war saw a further manifestation of the PLO's political decline. Iraqi president Saddam Hussein cynically tried to link withdrawal of his troops from Kuwait to the Palestinians' demand for national self-determination. The PLO leadership endorsed this linkage, revealing a deepening course of bourgeoisification—turning its eyes away from independent mass struggle by workers and farmers and toward accommodation with bourgeois Arab regimes.

The Oslo accords, signed in 1993, furthered this process. The agreement between Tel Aviv and the PLO promised limited Palestinian self-administration in some

areas of the West Bank and Gaza, with Israel retaining overall sovereignty. But in reality its goal was to bring the Palestinian movement more closely under the control of Washington, and by extension Israel, and to use it to try to crack down on militant Palestinian resistance.

In the decade since the Oslo accords, the Israeli rulers have increased the settler population in Palestinian areas by more than 70 percent. They have built a wall inside the West Bank, cutting the Palestinian population off from Israeli population centers and extending the territorial claims of the Zionist state.

In 1998 Arafat and Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu signed another agreement. In it, Tel Aviv promised to carry out long delayed troop withdrawals from Palestinian areas in return for the Palestinian leadership reaffirming its vote to remove clauses from the PLO charter calling for the overthrow of the Israeli state and the establishment of a democratic, secular Palestine.

With the outbreak of a second intifada in late 2000, armed groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad, which call for the replacement of Israel with an Islamic state, stepped into the leadership vacuum. They gained recruits and led the bombing campaign that increasingly marked the second intifada, which peaked in a wave of suicide bombings in 2002 aimed primarily at civilian targets inside Israel. These reactionary, bourgeois forces offered a course counter to the interests of Palestinian toilers, ultimately isolating themselves.

Over the past two years, with deadly precision, the Israeli military has killed or captured much of the leadership and many of the cadres of Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

At the same time, a growing section of the leadership of Fatah and the Palestinian Authority has focused on seeking to cut a deal with Tel Aviv and Washington, and in the process, increasing their collaboration with the CIA and other imperialist institutions.

Despite the blows Tel Aviv and Washington have dealt to the fight for Palestinian national rights, however, they have been unable to resolve the conflict. Within the framework of imperialism, there is no solution to the Palestinian question. The Palestinian struggle for land and national liberation remains the axis of the class struggle in Israel and throughout those areas that historically constituted Palestine.

### Washington's Assault on Iraq: Opening Guns of World War III

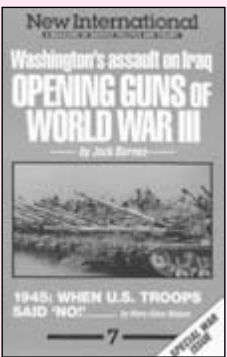
by Jack Barnes, in 'New International' no. 7

Includes an explanation of why one of Washington's political obstacles to achieving its broader goals in the Middle East is the irrepressible fight by the Palestinians for land and national self-determination—above all the struggle of the Palestinians living inside the post-1967 borders of "Greater Israel."



### Israel and the Arab Revolution

This document of fundamental principles of revolutionary Marxism was adopted at the August 1971 Socialist Workers Party convention. The Arab revolution is a permanent and massive component of the colonial revolution. It is confronted with many of the same basic tasks, and shares many of the same problems as other sectors of the colonial revolution. \$7



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# SWP vice-presidential candidate visits Quebec and Scotland

BY SÉBASTIEN DESAUTELES

MONTREAL—On the first day of her November 7-8 visit here, Arrin Hawkins, Socialist Workers Party vice-presidential candidate in the U.S. elections, met with nearly two dozen workers on strike against Volailles Marvid. The poultry workers welcomed the socialist candidate and discussed a wide range of questions while the boss was watching through the window of the plant.

Hawkins described her experiences at the picket line of workers on strike against Quality Meat Packers (QMP) in Toronto, which she had visited two days earlier. The company's inability to divide the workforce by nationality is a strength of the workers there fighting for livable wages, she said.

André Blémur, who has been working at Volailles Marvid for 18 years and who is now a general worker in the salting department, asked how did QMP workers achieved this level of unity.

Hawkins replied that QMP workers are using their union more effectively by drawing on their experiences during a previous strike they lost six years ago. "They are mobilizing union power like you are doing now," she said. The need of workers to organize unions and use those that already exist to resist more effectively the bosses' attacks on our wages and benefits has been at the center of the SWP campaign, Hawkins said, along with the need to build a labor party based on the trade unions that would fight to defend the interests of working people 365 days a year.

Glorieuse Dorvil, another Volailles Marvid worker, said the threats of closing the plant don't scare them anymore.

Hawkins said she identified with this attitude. Only by standing up to the employers and telling them, when they threaten to shut down, that any company that can't pay decent wages and benefits doesn't deserve to stay in business do we have a chance to fight to win, she said. And if a company folds up tent and moves, workers should do our best to follow them wherever they go and collaborate with fellow workers at the new location to organize and fight the bosses there too.

Later that afternoon, Hawkins met with other workers on strike against the provincial liquor stores. In the evening she spoke at a Militant Labor Forum in Montreal, which 20 people attended.

Hawkins was welcomed by students at two colleges the next day. At Maisonneuve Cegep, the International Solidarity Action Group (GASI), a student organization, opened its office to anyone who wanted to hear about and discuss the SWP campaign.

After Hawkins described her experiences on the Volailles Marvid picket line, one of the students asked about the exact location of the poultry workers strike. Eight of the students signed up to visit the picket line.

One of the students said that workers in northern Quebec had occupied a part of the aluminum refinery protesting the shutdown of that operation. He explained that they were able to run the smelter better than the bosses had, which showed that workers don't need bosses.

Hawkins said that such gains can only be temporary as long as the capitalist system remains intact. A social revolution is needed, so workers and farmers can take state power and begin reorganizing production and distribution of goods for the benefit of the vast majority, not the profits of a tiny minority, she said.

Hawkins and campaign supporters were there all morning. Before students left for classes at noon, several had bought copies of the *Militant* and Pathfinder Press pamphlets in French.

That afternoon, through the initiative of one of the students who had heard Hawkins speak the day before at the Militant Labor Forum, Hawkins spoke to a political science class at Rosemont

College. One of the students was happy to translate and even though the professor had originally allotted 15 minutes for Hawkins he kept encouraging students to ask any questions they might have.

One of the points that drew the students' interest was the explanation by Hawkins on why the SWP campaign champions the right of semicolonial countries to develop the sources of energy they need for economic development, including nuclear power. Such development, she said, is a precondition for any economic and political advances of working people. The SWP campaign also exposes the hypocritical efforts of Washington and other imperialist powers to prevent countries like Iran and north Korea from developing nuclear energy under the banner of "nonproliferation," Hawkins said.

The lively exchange lasted about 45 minutes and Hawkins was warmly applauded at the end.



BY CAROLINE BELLAMY

EDINBURGH, Scotland—"Workers all over the world are facing attacks as bosses drive to increase profits," said Arrin Hawkins, as she joined distributors of the *Militant* at the factory gate of the Halls pork plant outside Edinburgh. She was responding to a worker who stopped by and described deteriorating conditions at the factory through speedup to increase productivity. The worker said the firm was becoming "Americanized."

He and other workers were interested in the descriptions by Hawkins of working-class struggles throughout North America—from the Co-Op miners' union organizing fight in Huntington, Utah, to the Quality Meat Packers strike in Toronto, Ontario.

Campaigning at the Halls plant gate was a highlight of the November 11-13 visit to Scotland by the SWP vice-presidential candidate.

Hawkins also joined a team of *Militant*



Militant

SWP vice-presidential candidate Arrin Hawkins (left) speaks November 8 with poultry workers on strike against Volailles Marvid plant near Montreal, Quebec.

distributors at the Soapworks factory in Glasgow, where workers recently scored a victory after striking for better wages and dignity on the job. Seventeen Soapworks workers bought copies of the *Militant* during campaigning at that plant gate.

"They're using our compassion for suffering to whip up support for the war, but it was about oil. If there had been a justification for war, though, I would have voted for it," said Steven, one worker who spoke to Hawkins for a while, referring to the U.S.-led war against Iraq.

"All their wars are to maintain economic domination and about how the imperialist powers will divide the world among themselves," Hawkins replied. "They are never about easing suffering of the Iraqis or any other peoples."

"Why does Britain always follow the U.S.?" was one of the questions at a November 11 Militant Labour Forum here, where Hawkins spoke on the "Real Results of the U.S. Elections."

"Blair is not George Bush's poodle," Hawkins replied. "The British ruling class is following its own policies. It sees participation in the war in Iraq as strengthening its interests in the region. French and German imperialism lost their investments in Iraq but the British government wants a piece of the action through its 'special relationship' with Washington." Since the decline of the British empire during World War II, and the emergence of Washington as the

number one imperialist power, London has clung to this relationship out of its relative weakness, Hawkins said.

"Why do people in the Third World who grow rice end up eating rice from the U.S. because it is cheaper?" asked a worker from Halls, attending his first forum.

"The tentacles of finance capital reach into every country," said Hawkins in response. "U.S. government subsidies, just like EU agricultural subsidies, go mainly to big capitalist farmers. Peasants in the Third World cannot compete, and they are driven off the land in huge numbers. Conditions of life become intolerable. As a result of imperialist domination, millions are driven to immigrate to the imperialist countries. We now find many working people from Asia, Africa, and Latin America in the factories and mines of the United States. To unite the working class across borders, we support the right of semicolonial countries to adopt whatever trade tariffs they need to protect domestic industry and agriculture, but we demand that Washington drop all its tariffs and other protectionist measures. We also demand the cancellation of the foreign debt of semicolonial nations and support their right to electrification by whatever means, including nuclear power, to achieve economic development that's necessary for any advances for workers and farmers."

After her visit to Scotland, Hawkins headed to London.

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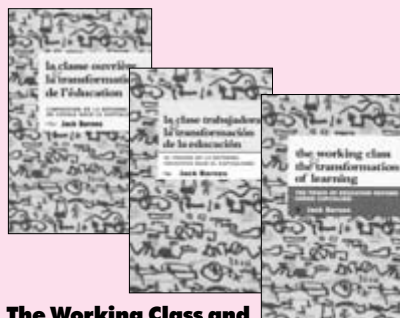
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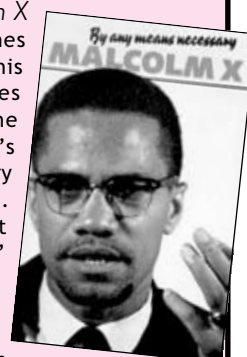
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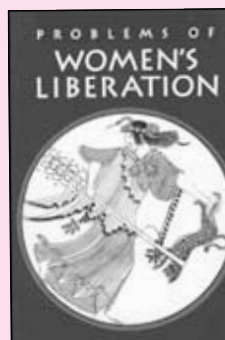
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# 1929 struggle to organize unions in U.S. South

Below is an excerpt from *American Labor Struggles* by Samuel Yellen, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for November. The selection is from "Revolt of the 'lint-heads'" about the fight to organize the textile mills in Tennessee and the Carolinas in 1929. It is one of 10 labor battles described in the book, from the uprisings on the railroads in 1877 to the strike by longshore workers on the West Coast centered in San Francisco that paralyzed shipping for three months in the summer of 1934. The National Textile Workers Union attracted the most militant workers—admitting Blacks into membership and opposing discrimination against women. Its potential was wasted by the factionalism of its leadership—dominated at the time by the Stalinized Communist Party. The union was dissolved in 1934. Copyright © 1981 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY SAMUEL YELLEN

In the absence of unionization, the possibility of organized protest by the southern cotton-mill workers was small. Had there



Strikers climb fence at Bemberg textile plant in Elizabethton, Tennessee. They appealed to workers inside to join strike at the Glanzstoff plant in the same town and owned by the same bosses. About 5,000 workers struck the two plants in March 1929.

been a strong union in the field, the differentials in wages and hours between North and South might have been wiped out; but many powerful factors operated against the development of such a union. First, the "lint-heads," as the southern cotton-mill workers were called, received wages so low that they could not pay union dues and would have been unable to sustain a strike if it proved necessary. The financial support, therefore, would have to come almost entirely from the northern textile unions, who were themselves in dire need of money. Second, the southern mill owners were unalterably opposed to the unionization of their employees; in fact, many northern mills had moved to the South to escape union restrictions. Third, the existing textile unions in the North were not only weak, but also divided among themselves. In addition to the United Textile Workers of America, which was affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, there were the American Federation of Textile Operatives and a number of small independent local craft unions. In 1927 the United Textile Workers had 20,000 members and the other unions together an equal number—in all, 40,000 organized workers out of a total of 600,000 in the nation's textile industry. These unions, furthermore, had no

foothold in the South; although there had been a good-sized flurry in unionization among the southern textile workers during the World War, practically every trace had been stamped out in the two years following the war. Moreover, the workers in these unions were the highly skilled operatives; and little effort was made to organize the unskilled and semi-skilled until late in 1928 under the impetus of the newly-formed National Textile Workers' Union, initiated under Communist guidance to rival the conservative unions in the field.

Consequently, it was not union penetration that caused the sudden outbursts of southern textile workers in the spring of 1929; it was rather the slow accumulation of grievances against low wages, long hours, and the stretch-out. With one exception, the simultaneous strikes that broke out spontaneously in three widely separated areas—Elizabethton, Tennessee; Gaston County, North Carolina; and the Piedmont region of South Carolina—and involved 17,000 workers were not at first concerned with the right of collective bargaining.

The first of the strikes began at Happy Valley, near Elizabethton, Tennessee, where the American Glanzstoff Corporation, a German firm, had recently constructed two rayon

plants, the Glanzstoff and the Bemberg. On March 12, 1929, some 500 girls in the inspection department at the Glanzstoff plant walked out in protest against full-time wages of \$8.96 to \$10.80 a week. The next day found the entire force of 3,000 on strike for an increase in pay to equal the higher pay at the Bemberg plant. The strikers called upon the United Textile Workers for assistance, and Alfred Hoffman was sent to organize them. When President A.M. Mothwurf of the American Glanzstoff Corporation procured a writ of injunction which forbade outright all picketing, the Bemberg plant replied by a solid walkout in sympathy with the Glanzstoff strikers. On March 22 the strikers at both plants returned to work, after Mothwurf agreed to increase the wages at the Glanzstoff plant, to take back all the strikers without discrimination, and to meet grievance committees of the workers.

Notwithstanding this agreement, Mothwurf undertook to break the union—which included 4,653 members out of the 5,500 employees at the two plants—and complaints of discrimination against union members were numerous. As a result, President Green of the A. F. of L. sent Vice-President E.F. McGrady to investigate. McGrady reported that in one week more than 300 workers were discharged for unionism. Discrimination and provocation against union members continued. On April 4 McGrady and Hoffman were kidnapped by groups of armed men, taken across the state line, and threatened with death if they returned. They returned the next day and filed charges against their kidnapers; five prominent business men of Elizabethton were arrested and indicted on charges of kidnapping and felonious assault, but were never brought to trial. When a grievance committee of the workers was discharged by Mothwurf and another committee sent to find out the cause was likewise discharged, the forces at both plants walked out a second time on April 15. Mothwurf called for troops; and even though there had been no violence, Governor Horton immediately dispatched two companies of the National Guard. G.F. Milton, editor of the *Chattanooga News*, concluded: "The truth seems to be that the Tennessee manufacturers were apprehensive of a labor success at Elizabethton; they looked upon it as an entering wedge for the unionization of the South.... There is every reason to believe that the troops went to Elizabethton to quiet this apprehension."

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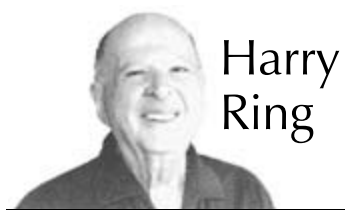
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8

The Militant November 30, 2004



**Affirmative action?**—The “Justice” Department disclosed that women prisoners have, for the first time, topped the 100,000



Harry Ring

mark—a record 101,179 are in state and federal prisons.

Why? Cops are making more arrests and judges are handing out more and longer sentences. The data compiled for the feds is not limited to women prisoners. Nearly 10 percent of the country’s

Black men aged 25 to 29 are in prison.

**The gruesome society**—“Coeur d’Alene, Idaho—Workers at Bluebird Recycling found the crushed body of a homeless man between layers of compacted cardboard. Authorities said the man may have climbed into a recycling bin to keep warm. The men’s emergency area was filled.”—News item.

**Greed, speed, and recall**—General Motors is recalling 1.23 million vehicles, bringing the year’s total to 24.8 million, a record-buster. GM said the recalls may be rising because automakers are speeding the line to fix

more quickly the defects caused by installation of more complex equipment. No mention of the assembly line workers battered by relentless line speed.

**Yo skinny, low plane fare**—Airline moguls are wailing about the slew of passengers with swelling girth lines. What with rip-off fuel prices, they wail that the asserted increase of portly passengers, boosts costs.

**P.S.**—Some time back air lines tried to limit the size of carry-on bags by checking dubious ones if they fit into special-size boxes at the check-in counters. Perhaps they are considering reviving the practice with passenger scales?

**Not peculiar to USA?**—Without much thought, we tended to assume “zero tolerance” was a nutty practice of U.S. school boards. Not so. In Liverpool, England, zero tolerance on littering is now a force in the municipal anti-littering ordinance. Gary Colbert was one of 42 recently brought into court. He pleaded guilty to dropping a match on the ground. He was stunned by a fine and court cost near \$200.

**A steal**—Generally, most folks in New York’s Manhattan live in the streets’ aged tenements and, sometimes, apartments. One-family houses are hardly noticed. Currently, one such home, possibly still available, was featured in

the *Wall Street Journal*. It includes four bedrooms and five baths, an outdoor garden, etc. But, dig this: Also included, a two-car garage. Asking price, \$5.25 million. That may sound pricey, but with mind-boggling Manhattan parking fees and the brisk sale of parking-slot condos, a two-car-garage included should easily fetch more than the house.

**Militant sub, anyone?**—“The idea that candidates are packaged like a brand of cheese or beer may be distasteful to some, but political marketers are counted among a candidate’s political advisers.”—A staff pundit for the *Chicago Tribune* offers an analysis of the recent elections.

## How Stalinism used lies to betray Russian Revolution

Below is an excerpt from *The Stalin School of Falsification*, newly reissued by Pathfinder Press. It was brought out as it was originally published in 1937 under Trotsky’s supervision, with new typography and a new cover. Trotsky’s 1932 article “On the Suppressed Testament of Lenin,” has been added as an appendix. The excerpt below is from the October 1927 “Letter to the Bureau of Party History.” Copyright © 2004 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission. A review of this book was published in last week’s issue.

BY LEON TROTSKY

Esteemed Comrades: You have sent me a very detailed printed questionnaire concerning my participation in the October Revolution, and you request an answer. I doubt if I could add much to what is printed in various documents, speeches, articles and books, my own among them. But I permit myself to ask you: What is the sense of questioning me about my participation in the October Revolution when the entire official machine, yours along with the rest, is occupied with concealing, destroying, or at least distorting every trace of that participation?

Hundreds of comrades have asked me again and again why I continue silent in the face of a perfectly outrageous falsification, directed against me, of the history of the October Revolution and the history of our party. I certainly do not intend here to exhaust the theme of these falsifications. That would require several volumes. But in answer to your questionnaire, I will indicate a few dozen examples of this conscious and spiteful distortion of the past, which is now organized on an enormous scale, sustained by the authority of all kinds of public institutions, and even carried into the textbooks.

The war and my arrival in Petrograd (May 1917)

1. I arrived in Petrograd from a Canadian prison at the beginning of May 1917, on the second day after the entry of the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionists into the coalition government.

The organs of the *Ispart*, like many others, are trying at this late date to describe my work during the war as bordering on social-patriotism. In this attempt they “forget” that a collection of my writings during the war (*War and Revolution*) was published in many editions during Lenin’s life, was studied in the party schools, and appeared in foreign translation among the publications of the Communist International.

You are trying to deceive the younger

generation in regard to my line during the war—to deceive those who do not know that for my revolutionary internationalist struggle during the war, I was condemned in my absence to be imprisoned in Germany as early as the end of 1914. This was for my German book, *The War and the International*. I was deported from France where I worked with the future founders of the Communist party; I was arrested in Spain where I had formed connections with the future Communists; I was deported from Spain to the United States; carried on revolutionary internationalist work in New York; participated with Bolsheviks in the editorship of the newspaper, *Novy Mir*, and there gave a Leninist evaluation of the first stages of the February Revolution. Returning from America to Russia, I was removed from the steamship by the British authorities, spent a month in a concentration camp in Canada along with six or eight hundred German sailors whom I recruited on the side of Liebknecht and Lenin. (Many of them took part afterward in the civil war in Germany and I receive letters from them to this day.)

2. On the subject of an English dispatch as to the causes of my arrest in Canada, Lenin’s *Pravda* wrote as follows: “Is it possible to believe for a minute in the validity of the dispatch received by the English government stating that Trotsky, the former chairman of the Soviet of Workers’ Deputies in St. Petersburg in 1905—a revolutionist devoted for decades to the service of the revolution—that this man had any connection with a plan subsidized by the ‘German government’? This is clearly a monstrous and unscrupulous slander against a revolutionist!” (*Pravda*, No.34, April 16, 1917.)

How fresh these words sound now in this epoch of contemptible slanders against the Opposition, differing in no essential from the slanders against the Bolsheviks in 1917!

3. A note on page 482, Volume XIV of the Collected Works of Lenin, published in 1921, reads:

“From the beginning of the imperialist war, [Trotsky] took a clear-cut internationalist position.”

Such comments, and still more categorical ones, could be adduced to any number. The writers in our entire party press, both Russian and foreign, have pointed out hundreds of times in reviewing my book, *War and Revolution*, that, considering my work during the war as a whole, one must recognize and understand that my differences with Lenin were of a subordinate character and that my fundamental line was revolution-



Leon Trotsky and staff reviewing the 2nd Red Army, Zarapul, 1919, in Soviet Russia.

ary and continually brought me nearer to Bolshevism—and this not only in words, but in deeds.

4. You are trying after the event to assemble quotations of certain isolated, sharply polemical remarks of Lenin’s against me, among them some that were made during the war. Lenin could never endure any half-statements or unclearness. He was right in dealing double and triple blows when a political thought seemed to him incomplete or equivocal. But a polemical blow struck at a given moment is one thing, the appraisal of a

man’s political line as a whole is another.

In 1918, in America, a certain F. published a collection of articles by Lenin and me during the war period, among them my articles on the then controversial question of the United States of Europe. How did Lenin react to that? He wrote:

“...the American comrade, F., was wholly right in publishing a big volume containing a series of articles by Trotsky and me and thus giving a handbook of the history of the Russian Revolution.” (Works, Vol. XVII, p. 96, Russ. ed.)

## —25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



November 30, 1979

Twenty-nine Arab mayors in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip resigned en masse November 13-14 to protest the Israeli cabinet’s decision to go ahead with the deportation of Nablus Mayor Bassam al-Shaka.

Amid demonstrations and strikes in Nablus, Hebron, Ramallah, Jenin, Bir Zeit, and other towns, the mayors issued a statement saying: “We shall never kneel, we shall never bow, we shall never bargain and we shall never give up a grain of our national soil.”

Shaka was arrested November 11, presented with the expulsion order, and imprisoned pending deportation, because of remarks he made in a private conversation with Gen. Danny Matt, the military governor of the West Bank.

Shaka was accused of supporting terrorist actions because he told Matt that “operations like these, if they occur, are only a reaction to other acts.” He added: “As long as there is occupation and killing, you can expect many operations of this type.”



November 29, 1954

Since Nov. 5 the *Daily Worker* has been making an extensive analysis of the election returns. The analysis boils down to these principal points: Labor played a decisive

role in the Democratic victory; this vote expressed labor opposition to McCarthyism and the Big Business policies of the Republican Party; the Democratic victory was not as decisive as it could have been because the Democrats failed to put forward a program for peace and jobs, and in fact permitted the Republicans to appear as the “peace” party.

The conclusion drawn from this by the Stalinists is that the unions must organize for the 1956 elections so that they will become a strong enough force within the Democratic Party to compel it to adopt a program for peace and social progress.

According to the Stalinist reasoning, the Democratic leadership simply doesn’t understand on which side their bread is buttered and it is Labor’s job to bring them to their senses.

Down through the years, one of the persistent illusions prevalent in the American radical and labor movement has been the utopian scheme that “due to peculiarities of our two-party system,” with its direct primary device, Labor will someday capture the Democratic Party. This is one idea that the Stalinists do not share. Even if it were a realizable goal the Stalinists would want no part of it. Their objective is not to dislodge the capitalists from control of the Democratic Party but to establish an alliance with them.

This was explained last May in the Stalinist magazine, *Political Affairs*, which declared that a progressive new administration would be established “by an exceedingly broad class alliance—the working class, the poor and middle farmers, the urban middle class, non-monopoly groupings of capital, and the less reactionary circles of Big Business.”

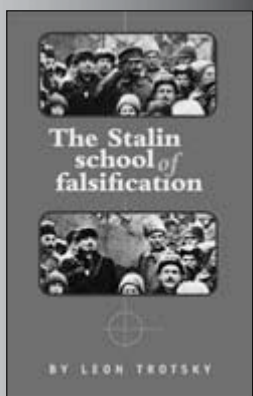
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BY LEON TROTSKY

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# Bring the troops home now!

End the imperialist occupation of Iraq! Bring the troops home now!

We urge you to join with others in using the *Militant* and its sister publication *Perspectiva Mundial* to campaign with these demands on the job, at factory gates, in the streets or door-to-door visits in working-class neighborhoods, on picket lines, at antiwar rallies, and other public actions.

This is needed in face of Washington's new brutal offensive in Iraq, which began with the assault on Fallujah and has spread to Mosul and other Iraqi cities.

The U.S. forces are carrying out the war they didn't fight during last year's invasion. Their goal is to smash the organized units of the army of the Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein that dissolved last year in face of the imperialist invaders, hid much of their weaponry and ammunition, and have exacted a high price from the occupation troops in the last 18 months. There is no way for the U.S. military to win this war without definitively defeating the core of its enemy's forces.

Washington prepared the Fallujah offensive for weeks. It launched it, however, five days after the November 2 U.S. elections. The purpose of this was to avoid giving liberal critics of the Bush administration additional ammunition for their partisan, and false, arguments about a U.S. "quagmire" in Iraq. The timing of Colin Powell's resignation was not a mere coincidence. The outgoing secretary of state has had tactical disagreements with the Bush administration over the conduct of the war. In fact, the 2003 assault was Rumsfeld's war, but was followed by Powell's occupation. The course argued by Powell and former U.S. proconsul in Iraq Paul Bremer delayed the installation of a client regime in Baghdad, the launching of a domestic army the U.S. military could bloody and train, and the final onslaught against the Baathists. But it was merely a delay.

The *Militant* argued that Washington would pursue the war in Iraq regardless of who won the White House. We said from the beginning this was not Bush's war but an imperialist assault that serves the interests of America's ruling billionaire families. The remark by Democrat John Kerry in his November 3 concession speech about "American unity" and the need to "stand together and succeed in the war in Iraq and win the war on terror" is a case in point.

Before Washington launched the invasion in March 2003, the *Militant* explained that the assault on Iraq was not a war of liberation to bring "freedom" and "democracy" to the Iraqi people, as the U.S. rulers claimed. It was a war of imperialist conquest. At its heart was the goal of dealing blows to Washington's rivals—especially Paris and Berlin, which had lucrative investments in the country. It was a war over who would control the strategic oil platform that Iraq sits on. It was a war about changing the relationship of forces in the Mideast in favor of U.S. imperialism, as capitalism has entered a worldwide economic depression.

The invading armies swept through Iraq quickly from the south. But they were prevented from launching a simultaneous invasion from the north because of Ankara's refusal to let Turkish soil be used for the operation. The elite units of Baghdad's Republican Guard dissolved in face of massive American firepower. Baathists from central Iraq largely staffed these units. That's where the Hussein regime had its strongest base of support.

Baathist forces from the Sunni Triangle formed the core of the party-police state apparatus of the Hussein regime. Although they've lost their privileges since the U.S.-led invasion, they maintained much of their fighting cohesion and weaponry and have been using it in recent months. The Baathists ruled the country with brutality, earning the hatred of the majority of Iraqis—from the Kurds in the north to the

Shiites, who are the majority of the population.

That's why, just like during last year's invasion, there isn't much of a protest from Shiites or Kurds in Iraq as Washington flattens sections of Fallujah and moves beyond. No protests are coming from the government of Saudi Arabia, either—a majority Sunni Muslim country—or any of the other regimes in the region.

Washington's main goal is not to ensure that elections are held in Fallujah and the rest of the Sunni-dominated areas. The U.S. rulers could care less if most Sunnis boycott a vote. They intend to teach Iraq's former ruling group that the interim regime in Baghdad, its successor, and their U.S. sponsors are not to be messed with. The U.S. government's aim is to defeat the Baathists in order to consolidate its victory, allowing Washington to establish a stable client regime that would serve U.S. imperialism's strategic interests in the region.

Elections, whether they take place in January or later next year, will simply ratify the facts on the ground—such as the deals with Shiite and Kurdish groups that U.S. forces are making alongside their military offensive.

The use of Kurdish military units to help repel attacks by Baathists and others on police stations in Mosul is part of this process. It's possible Washington is laying the groundwork for giving control of sections of the two largest cities in the north to Kurdish parties that have collaborated with U.S. imperialism for more than a decade, along with some form of autonomy for Iraqi Kurdistan. This is part of the preparation for setting up a federated Iraq.

Not much stands in the way of this course by U.S. imperialism in Iraq, with all its ramifications for the broader Middle East.

There is no revolutionary resistance in Iraq today to U.S. imperialist domination. That is not because the Iraqi toilers are incapable of fighting. They were disarmed politically, relegated to the sidelines, and forced to act out of fear by the Baathist regime that run a party-police state for 40 years. The bourgeois, reactionary methods of "Islamist" groups that have been kidnapping and beheading hostages simply add to the equation.

U.S. imperialism, however, is not invincible. The use of brute military force in Iraq and the wars to come is a sign of economic and political weakness, not strength. Washington's military victory in Iraq cannot reverse the downward slide of the curve of capitalist development. Rather, it can accelerate the capitalist depression that is setting in across larger parts of the globe. Conflicts will sharpen between the imperialist powers over the spoils of their wars in Iraq, Ivory Coast, or elsewhere. Yes, trade wars can lead to shooting wars. But military conflicts can accelerate trade conflicts as well.

The permanent instability created by capitalism and imperialism will create more and more openings for working people of Iraq and the region to develop their own revolutionary leadership. To accomplish that the Iraqi toilers need time and an end to the imperialist occupation.

The offensive by the employing classes worldwide to shore up their declining profit rates is also generating resistance. In the middle of the Iraq war, working people in Canada, the United States, and other imperialist countries have waged strikes and other defensive struggles to resist the bosses' offensive to make us pay for the decline of their system. We need to join with those workers and farmers who refuse to subordinate their struggles to "national unity" and "homeland defense," and whose actions are objectively the beginning of resistance to imperialist war by the working class—the only class capable of stopping the war makers.

## U.S. troops wage war on Baathists

Continued from front page

its soil for a simultaneous invasion from the north.

A day after the takeover of Fallujah, 1,200 U.S. troops along with forces of the Iraqi interim government had sealed off the five bridges over the Tigris river in Mosul, northern Iraq. They blocked off the western sections of the city, largely inhabited by Sunni Arabs who had dominated the government under Hussein. The assault in Mosul came after Baathists attacked police stations there to aid their brothers who had been besieged in Fallujah. U.S. troops are carrying out similar operations in the northern city of Kirkuk.

"It's ongoing offensive operations to eliminate all the pockets of resistance that are out there," Lt. Col. Paul Hastings, told the press. "Now we are trying to catch a wider swath of targeted areas." Hastings is the spokesman for Task Force Olympia, the U.S. units charged with controlling northern Iraq.

### The assault on Fallujah

The U.S. assault on Fallujah had been prepared for weeks. It was not launched, however, until five days after the November 2 U.S. elections. Preparations included dropping of flyers from planes urging civilians to leave and a three-week bombardment campaign prior to the ground attack. According to press reports, most of the city's population of 250,000 had fled by November 7.

Some 25,000 troops, mostly U.S. Marines, along with 2,000 Iraqi troops, sealed off Fallujah and Ramadi just days before the assault began.

The formal pretext for the attack was the refusal by Sunni clerics and other Baathists in Fallujah and Ramadi to turn over to the interim government of Iraqi prime minister Iyad Allawi leaders of groups entrenched there that had carried out bombings of civilian and military targets, and kidnappings and beheadings of hostages. Officials of Allawi's administration said that two on the wanted list, Jordanian Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and Abdullah al-Janabi, had not been found in Fallujah. Al-Zarqawi is the leader of Tawhid and Jihad, a group that has taken responsibility for beheadings of hostages and bombing attacks.

Baghdad had also said that Fallujah was a haven for "foreign fighters" crossing the border from Syria to fight against the U.S. occupation.

U.S. Col. Michael Regner, operations officer for the First Marine Expeditionary Force in Fallujah, said, however, that of the 1,052 individuals captured during the fighting there, all but 20 were Iraqis. Much of what has been reported, points to those resisting being well-trained former members of elite units of the Republican Guard that was the core of the Hussein regime's military.

The fighting in the Sunni Triangle sharply contrasts with what U.S. troops faced against militias in the Shia-populated cities of Najaf, Kufa, and Karbarla in April. "Very few of them are giving up," Col. Regner said, according to the Associated Press. "They're fighting to the death."

In numerous press reports U.S. commanders noted that they have faced a more determined, better equipped and

Continued on next page

## What's character of British Labour Party?

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON—"Despite its bourgeois, imperialist politics, is the British Labour Party still somewhat of a labor party, or only in name?" asks reader Robby Kopec in the November 2, 2004 issue of the *Militant*.

Kopec is right about the party's "bourgeois, imperialist politics." The present Labour government is just the latest case. Since its formation in 1906, the Labour Party "in and out of government" has supported the British empire and Britain at war; doffed its collective hat to the British monarchy; exuded nationalism; and been a faithful servant of the British rulers' assaults on workers at home.

The capitalist program, electoralist orientation and structure of the party—the party leadership has never been under the control of the ranks—doesn't tell the whole story, however.

Fighting workers for many years viewed it as a party of labor, an echo of Labour's origins in major working-class battles. When millions of unskilled workers swelled the ranks of the unions at the end of the nineteenth century, they forced a break with the capitalist Liberal Party, whose left-wing tail

## REPLY TO A READER

had been headed up by the labor aristocratic union leaders. But while the new party was an organizational break from the Liberal Party, it continued liberal labor politics. In 1914 the Labour party leaders rushed to support World War I. The party that emerged after the first world interimperialist slaughter was a pale reflection of even the pre-war party, let alone having anything in common with a striving for class independence. What gave Labour's pretence to working-class credentials a new lease on life was Stalinism.

Under the impetus of the Russian Revolution of 1917 the Communist Party was founded in Britain. Prospects for building a proletarian party in the huge class battles of the 1920s were good. The Stalinist policies of those who dominated the fledgling Communist Party, however, ensured this didn't happen. The CP prettified the reformist trade union leaders and effectively liquidated itself into left labor formations. In the nine-day general strike of 1926 they called for "all power" to the strike-breaking general council of the TUC with which Stalin maintained relations. After a flip-flop in which they exited the unions denouncing them as "reactionary" and condemning the Labour Party as "social fascist" putting further wind in Labour's sails, the Stalinists turned to class collaborationist popular frontism: the bureaucrats in the Soviet Union kept as close as possible to "left Labour MPs" and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), as it was called for many years, acted as the foot soldiers of the reformist union and Labour leaders giving a progressive veneer to Labour's links with the unions.

The membership of the Labour Party still included substantial numbers of workers. Periodically, Marxist currents developed in the party, including winning the leadership of the party's youth organizations. Workers involved in struggle would often turn toward Labour, looking for solidarity.

The last major case of unions seeking to bend Labour to their will was the coal miners strike of 1984-85. The miners won applause at the Labour Party conference and some MPs campaigned in their support. But the party leadership railed against the strikers and their leaders, playing the major part—alongside the TUC General Council—in ensuring the defeat of the strike. The party leadership also launched a purge, expelling a socialist current and making the party less and less habitable by workers. The result has been a bourgeoisification of the party's social composition. At the same time, Stalinism—the force inside the labor movement that had kept Labour's working class credentials echoing from the grave—suffered a mortal blow. With the shattering of the Stalinist apparatuses in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the CPGB went into terminal decline.

Millions of workers celebrated Labour's election in 1997 and the end of 18 years of Tory government marked by the Thatcher-Reagan course of the 1980s. But hopes have been dashed. Today, workers engaged in resistance to the bosses attacks on wages and working conditions are not looking to Labour. Those voting Labour at the next general election will not be casting a "class vote." Labour today stands before workers as a social imperialist party, looking far more like the Democrats in the United States than like the social democratic party it once claimed to be.

The Communist League in the UK won't be calling for a Labour vote at the next general election. It will run its own campaign under the watchword "it's not who you're against but what you are for." The League's program will advance the need to build and strengthen unions. It will point toward workers and farmers taking political power.

Such a course has nothing whatever to do with recent developments characterized by reader Robby Kopec as "unions disaffiliating from Labour, though not necessarily towards independent working class politics." One union, the Rail Maritime and Transport union (RMT) has broken organizationally with the Labour Party, having been expelled after backing non-Labour election candidates in Scotland. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU), involved in a series of strikes last year, threatened to end its affiliation. But neither of these represent a shift toward independent working-class politics. They are part of the labor bureaucrats' wars of position as they seek to compensate for the membership decline that's a consequence of the continuing weakening of the unions.



# U.S. forces wage war to defeat Baathists in Iraq

**Continued from previous page**  
trained opponent in Fallujah, Ramadi, and Mosul and that former officers of Hussein’s army are involved in leading them. On November 15, the Allawi administration said that Moayed Ahmed Yassin, the leader of the Army of Mohammed—a group accused of the beheadings of several Iraqi and foreign hostages—was among those captured. Iraq’s interior minister said that Yassin was a member of Hussein’s Republican Guard.

After driving Baathist forces from their positions in a section of Fallujah, Marines found a bunker complete with a network of steel-reinforced tunnels and connecting rooms. One of them contained an anti-aircraft gun, bunk beds, trucks, and a cache of weapons, according to the Bloomberg news service.

### How Marines fought

Various press reports indicated that the forces resisting the U.S. offensive in Fallujah included highly trained snipers and others who knew how to deploy tactically in battle and survive under intense enemy fire. An article by a *New York Times* reporter on the scene, for example, described how a small group of snipers held down 150 Marines for an entire day. The snipers reportedly escaped, even though they had been targeted with two air strikes of 500-pound bombs, 35 artillery shells, 10 tank rounds, and some 30,000 rounds of rifle fire.

U.S. forces waged the ground offensive in this fashion throughout the city. After taking over a section and drawing fire as they tried to advance to the next block they would take cover. Then they would call in air strikes and artillery bombardments.

Staff Sgt. Shawn Zawistowski, of the First Infantry’s Task Force 2-2, said eight artillery guns from his group had fired over 100 rounds each against Baathist positions in Fallujah in the first three days of the battle, according to the *Washington Post*. The guns fire rocket assisted shells up to a range of 22 miles. Each shell has a kill radius of 55 yards.

Unlike the restraint they had exhibited in the largely Shiite areas in the south earlier this year in not attacking mosques, U.S. commanders in Fallujah did not hesitate much to order the bombing of minarets used by snipers to pin down U.S. units. The November 13 shooting in the head of a wounded Iraqi laying on the ground in a mosque, which was recorded on TV and

broadcast by NBC News, was characteristic of the leeway the U.S. military gave its forces. After the publicity, the Marine caught on TV was removed from his unit and the incident is reportedly under investigation.

As a result, many of the city’s buildings were destroyed, numerous roads were torn up, and good parts of Fallujah’s electric grid and water and sewer systems were damaged. U.S. and Iraqi authorities have not released any figures on civilian casualties. U.S. commanders told the press their initial estimates is that they killed more than 1,200 insurgents in the assault.

The U.S. military is apparently poised to wage this phase of the war taking whatever casualties are necessary. Among the 15,000 U.S. troops involved in the attack on Fallujah, 38 were killed and 320 wounded, of whom 134 have returned to duty. In addition, six Iraqi national guardsmen were killed and 28 wounded, according to the U.S. military. These are casualties proportionately higher than those the U.S. military took during the March 2003 invasion. When the Bush administration declared combat operations over in May of that year, 138 U.S. troops had died of a total force of 250,000. In addition, 34 allied troops fell in battle then, among the 45,000 British, 2,000 Australian, and 200 Polish troops that took part in last year’s invasion.

### Absence of protests

There were no protests from leading Shia clerics and political parties to the assault on Fallujah. A statement by a spokesperson for Shia leader Ali al-Sistani condemned the violence by both U.S. forces and antigovernment Baathists but proposed no action. Muqtada al-Sadr, who headed armed revolts against U.S. troops in April, threatened not to participate in elections scheduled for next year while “Iraqi cities are under attack,” said a senior aide, according to the *New Zealand Herald*.

So far, earlier threats by Sunni clerics to issue a fatwa, or religious decree, ordering Muslims to conduct protests and a campaign of civil disobedience in response to the attack on Fallujah has not materialized. Those who would dare to take such a step would be considered a target of the new U.S. offensive.

The U.S. military arrested Nasir Ayif, a deputy head of the interim parliament, according to a November 15 Al-Jazeera TV report. Ayif is a leader of the Iraqi Islamic Party, the country’s largest Sunni political group. The party withdrew from the interim government in protest against the assault on Fallujah.

The reason for the absence of protests in Iraq is that the Sunni minority enjoyed extensive privileges under the Hussein regime. Sunnis dominated the military and thug police forces that carried out brutal repression, including arbitrary arrests, beatings, and murders, against the majority Shia in central and southern Iraq and the Kurdish



Reuters/Sgt. Jeremiah Johnson-U.S. Army

**U.S. Army soldier from Stryker Brigade Combat Team fires on Baathist positions in Mosul, northern Iraq, November 11. U.S. offensive there intensified five days later, as 1,200 U.S. troops and Iraqi soldiers blocked off Sunni-dominated sections of Mosul.**

minority in the north.

No significant protests have been reported either in Saudi Arabia—a majority Sunni Muslim country—or other countries in the region.

Sporadic protests in U.S. cities—from Chicago to New York and Los Angeles—called on the eve of the assault on Fallujah were small. They ranged from a few dozen to a couple of hundred.

U.S. warplanes also carried out raids using 500-pound bombs against Baathist positions in Baquba, killing 20, according to November 15 reports by the *Washington Post* and the Associated Press.

U.S. troops have been joined in the fighting in Mosul by thousands of former members of the Kurdish peshmerga guerrillas, according to the *New York Times*. The Kurdish troops have been incorporated into the regular Iraqi army, reported the *Boston Globe*.

Leaders of the main Kurdish political parties seek to obtain the widest range of autonomy in a federated Iraq. They enjoyed autonomy under the Hussein regime following the 1991 U.S.-led war against Iraq under the protection of a no-fly zone enforced by U.S. and British warplanes.

Kurds are an oppressed minority living in northern Iraq and parts of neighboring Turkey, Iran, Syria, and Armenia. Support for independence in Iraqi Kurdistan, as the northern region of Iraq is known, is widespread. In April, about 1.7 million Kurds of the estimated 4–7 million Kurds in Iraq signed a petition demanding a popular referendum on secession. The Kurdish flag is flown over most government buildings in

the Kurdish regions.

### The war wasn’t finished in 2003

The current offensive is the unfinished war the U.S. military did not fight last year. After the invasion, views of U.S. officials like Secretary of State Colin Powell and former U.S. civilian administrator of Iraq Paul Bremer prevailed, delaying the installation of an Iraqi interim government, the launching of the new Iraqi armed forces, and the final assault on the Baathist remnants in central and northern Iraq.

Fierce battles took place in Fallujah in March and April of this year, when U.S. forces laid siege to the city following the killings of four U.S. military “contractors.” Their burned and charred remains were strung from a bridge over the Euphrates river as many residents cheered. U.S. Marines were ordered to prepare an assault on the city ostensibly to capture those responsible.

A showdown with the Baathists was again postponed when the siege ended on April 30 with the announcement that the occupation authority headed by Bremer had negotiated an agreement to replace the Marines by establishing a Fallujah Brigade headed by former Iraqi military officers from Hussein’s army. The brigade never engaged the Baathist forces and was dissolved in September.

Powell resigned from his cabinet post in Washington November 15, as U.S. forces took over Fallujah. He was replaced by national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, a more reliable supporter of the Bush administration’s course.

## — CALENDAR —

### WASHINGTON

#### Yakima

**Rally and Bar-B-Que in Solidarity with Snokist Strikers** Speakers from labor and community groups. Sat. Nov. 20 12 noon. At Keys Rd. picket at Snokist cannery. 2506 Terrace Heights Dr.

## — LETTERS —

### Liberal whining

Could you please address the incessant liberal whining and demoralization that resulted from the loss of the Democratic Party presidential candidate on election day? A clear working-class analysis of the election results (including the so-called “moral” vote) would go a long way in combating the middle-class angst that seems rampant. I fear that many young people are falling for this defeatist attitude. The apparent suicide of a young person at “ground zero” over the election is a sad reflection of such thinking.

Ray Medina  
by e-mail

[See front-page article in last week’s issue “Middle-class contempt for workers fuels liberal panic over U.S. elections.”—Editor]

### Philadelphia schools

A union of school employees in Philadelphia—the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers—won a partial victory in the contract agreement with the Philadelphia

School District and the School “Reform” Commission (SRC).

After the state takeover of our schools, teachers have been forbidden to strike. If we had struck, teachers’ certification could have been taken away. Since we were willing to strike anyway, we got much of what we had wanted—some pay increases, only a slight increase in our health coverage, no longer school day, a counselor in every school, and an increase in supply allotment. Unfortunately, instead of selecting schools by seniority, some teachers will be selected by principals—a system that can result in principals favoring friends and relatives.

However, our four-year contract is a partial victory in a school system that spends among the least per child in the Philadelphia area. Chuck Wolfsteld  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

### Chinese and Mandarin

I am writing in regards to your article in the November 16 issue, “Meat packers strike in Toronto,

demand reversal of wage cuts,” which I especially liked.

It is not possible to “translate into Mandarin,” as the article said. You must translate into “Chinese.” All Chinese share the same written language, there is only one. There are, however, hundreds of spoken Chinese languages. Mandarin is such a dialect, the main one. In Chinese it is rendered “guo yu” (national [spoken] language) or “pu tong hua” (common tongue). Other spoken languages, or dialects, are Cantonese, Fukienese, Fuzhou, Toisanese, Shanghai-nese, etc.

It is also not correct to interpret into “Chinese,” as you can see. Therefore we translate into Chinese, or interpret into the spoken language.

We are all proud of the *Militant*’s accuracy. And I suspect the authors of the article and others are meeting a growing number of workers of Chinese origin. So it would be wonderful for the *Militant* to get this right. It would help educate other worker-correspondents.

Marty Anderson  
New York, New York

### Fight over trauma center

A fight is brewing in Los Angeles over County Board of Supervisors plans to close the trauma center at King-Drew hospital in Watts. The hospital was established in the years immediately following the uprising in Watts in 1965. Prior to that, there was no hospital equipped and staffed to provide trauma care in the entire south side of Los Angeles.

Saturday meetings are held to build a demonstration called for November 15 at a county Board of Supervisors meeting to protest plans to close the center. Politicians, religious figures, community activists, former patients of King-Drew and workers at the hospital have all spoken out on the necessity of keeping the trauma center open. Over 30,000 signatures have been collected to date on petitions to keep the trauma center open.

Workers at the hospital are organized in Local 660 of the Service Employees International Union. According to Christine Koundakjian, a nurse at the hospital involved in nurse hiring and training,

the entire county hospital system is understaffed by about 1,200 nurses. She pointed out that the pay rate is about 30 percent under the average for nurses in southern California.

Derrick Evans, a worker in the pharmacy at the hospital and a union steward for Local 660, said that trauma patients are already being diverted from King-Drew. He explained that when they have both trauma operating rooms filled, they are considered closed and patients are sent to other trauma centers. Evans said that ambulances are now being diverted to other hospitals even though space and staff exist to treat them at King-Drew. Chris Remple  
Los Angeles, California

**The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.**

**Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.**



# Metalworkers in Greece fight for back wages

BY GEORGES MEHRABIAN  
AND NATASHA TERLEXIS

ATHENS, Greece—On October 29 workers at the Fyrogenis air conditioning manufacturing plant here occupied the management offices. The plant is organized by the Metal Workers Union. “All 100 production workers participated in the occupation,” said Alekos, a press operator and union activist, in an interview. “And, importantly, for the first time, many office workers who are not union members joined in the action.”

“For the past six months we have been getting paid a week here and a week there. The result is that everyone is owed between two and four months’ back pay. Ten days prior to the occupation the boss promised to pay us two weeks [of back] wages. We said okay but you must then stay current and also pay every month some of the back pay we are owed,” Alekos continued. “The deadline passed and that is when we decided to occupy the offices.”

This action followed many months of mobilizations by the union membership, the unionist said, including several one-day strikes and work stoppages. When the company tried to shut the factory down for an extra week in August, with pay, workers decided to show up for work anyway because they did not know what the bosses

might do during their absence.

“We have been pushing for government action. Finally the vice-minister of labor, who should be more correctly called vice-minister for unemployment, intervened after a march of 100 we held to the ministry downtown,” Alekos said. “He arranged for a tripartite meeting where the boss and the union met with him. He heard us all out and then responded that there was nothing the government could do. He said that this is a free market society and if a company is not competitive then it should close. That was the government response.”

“Leading up to the Athens Olympic Games we did all sorts of production for installations for the games. Then, there was a collapse in production. Our factory is not the only one in trouble. Our sector, like the textiles, is very hard hit.”

Official unemployment in Greece has risen to 12 percent, even though last year the gross domestic product had record growth, the highest rate in the EU. But this growth was largely due to the massive construction projects leading up to the Olympics.

This mini-boom is over. In certain industries, such as garment, textile, and metal, workers have been hard-hit by layoffs and plant closures, especially of smaller plants. The larger businesses that are

more competitive have resorted to “voluntary” early retirements and speedup.

In October, hundreds of textile workers from the northern city of Naoussa held a rally in Athens at the main offices of their employer, Klonatex, a giant textile group. Klonatex closed its plant in Naoussa and locked out the workers. One hundred lost their jobs. This was the latest of a series of plant shut downs in Naoussa, famous for its textile industry. Workers there recently responded to the mounting layoffs with a city-wide general strike.

The crisis in Naoussa follows the shut down of Palco, a garment factory in Athens, and the loss of 500 jobs after a bitter fight with the union.

In a press statement, Klonatex said it is seeking to boost profits by becoming more



Makis

**Metalworkers occupied Fyrogenis air conditioning plant offices October 29 in Athens, Greece, to demand back wages.**

competitive. “This could include internal mergers,” it said, “and there are likely to be layoffs. One option may be moving plants to other countries, with China and the Balkans under consideration.”

Other companies have already taken such steps. Palco, for example, moved its operations to Bulgaria. According to studies cited by the Athens daily *Eleftherotypia*, 75 percent of garment production in Greece has moved to other countries, especially Bulgaria and China.

Despite the growing insecurity from the deteriorating economic situation, many workers, like those at Fyrogenis, are fighting back.

“During this whole time the company put us in a dilemma. They put it this way: ‘We either pay your wages or we buy raw materials for production. If you push us then we’ll be forced to shut down because we can’t do both.’ In the meantime, they are 10 years behind in social security payments to the government. For a while we bought into their logic because we wanted to keep our jobs,” Alekos said. “But we learned that we have to organize and fight collectively to gain even our back pay. On November 3, we decided to hold our union membership meeting right in the administration offices to discuss what action to take next. We voted unanimously to strike the next day. That afternoon, after so much stonewalling, the company came through with two weeks pay. We returned to work.”

The bosses then informed the workers the plant was sold to a French company. “We’ll see what the new situation will bring,” Alekos said. “But, we won’t let our guard down. As part of the fight we have filed a suit against the company for back pay. In case they stop paying us again or decide to close, we will activate the suit.”

## U.S. airlines drive through wage, benefit cuts

BY SAM MANUEL

Three of the largest U.S. airlines announced November 5 they are seeking to impose a new round of wage and benefit cuts on their employees. Some are also announcing large layoffs.

Delta Air Lines announced it would cut thousands of jobs, after securing agreement from its pilots to give back \$1 billion in salary and benefit cuts.

Delta said it plans to eliminate 2,000 maintenance jobs, and nearly 3,000 customer service jobs along with 1,800 management positions over 18 months, starting January 1. Executives at the airline said it may still go into bankruptcy even though the pilots’ union agreed to a 32.5 percent pay cut to help the company avoid Chapter 11.

Northwest Airlines said its pilots had approved a package of concessions, including a 15 percent pay cut totaling \$265 million.

United Airlines, in bankruptcy proceedings since 2002, has asked a judge to allow the company to tear up pension agreements involving 120,000 retirees and current workers and replace employee retirement plans with 401(k) contribution programs. These are invested in the stock market and are vulnerable to evaporate at any market plunge. United stopped paying its obligations into these pension funds this summer.

United asked for a November 19 hearing. It has also asked the bankruptcy judge to set a deadline for the unions to come to a “consensual” agreement in out-of-court talks on the concessions it is seeking. “Having a deadline often helps the parties in reaching a consensual resolution,” the company said in court papers, according to the *Post*.

The action by United would dump about \$8.3 billion in pension debt onto the federal Pension Benefit Guaranty Corp (PBGC), according to the *Washington Post*.

PBGC is the federal agency created by the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) under the Gerald Ford administration in the 1970s. It requires companies to set aside enough funds to cover pension obligations. Where a company defaults on its pension payments, the agency picks up a portion of the costs. In the case of United, the agency will pay \$6.4 billion. The remaining \$1.9 billion will come out of workers’ pockets from reduced benefits to retirees.

Top executives at United will not be charged with lawbreaking or any other wrongdoing for any of this because they have adhered to ERISA rules, said a No-

vember 6 *New York Times* article. ERISA allows plenty of latitude for companies to make their pension obligations look smaller, or make its financial health appear strong when a company is actually near collapse.

In the 1990s United set aside more money than needed to cover pension costs, building up a credit balance of \$1.3 billion by 2000. Then the technology bubble burst and stock prices, in which the pension fund was heavily invested, plummeted. Much of the \$1.3 billion in credits evaporated.

By the ERISA rules, however, the \$1.3 billion that United lost gambling on the stock market stayed on the books. When quarterly or annual contributions by the company came due, United did not have to part with a penny in cash because the books showed this \$1.3 billion credit, which was in fact worthless. In 2001, when funding for the flight attendants’ pension fund fell below 88 percent for the second time in three years, the company juggled \$68 million from the fictitious credit into the fund to make it appear solvent. As a result, it did not have to inform flight attendants of the precarious status of their pension fund or make higher premium payments to the PBGC, which

are required by law when funding falls below 90 percent of a company’s pension obligations. With this kind of creative accounting, in 2002 United was able to declare the pilots’ pension program to be funded at 102 percent—that is for every dollar owed to employees in pension benefits there was \$1.02 in the pension fund.

A spokesman for the International Association of Machinists, which represents 20,000 ramp workers and stock clerks along with gate and reservations agents at United, said the union is reviewing the company’s request for cuts.

In December 2002, United threatened bankruptcy unless the unions approved \$5.2 billion in wage and benefit concessions over five and a half years. The federal government, through its Air Transportation Stabilization Board (ATSB), said these kinds of concessions from the unions were needed as a condition for granting United \$1.8 billion in federal loan guarantees. United had asked for the loan guarantees to avoid insolvency. Union officials gave in. But the company went into bankruptcy anyway. It has used insolvency proceedings ever since as press for deeper and deeper cuts.

## Puerto Rico: striking water workers face FBI assaults

BY LAURA GARZA

BOSTON—The 4,300 water workers on strike against the Water and Sewer Authority in Puerto Rico are standing up to attacks from both management and the U.S. government. The walkout began October 4. The water authority and Washington are seeking to crush the strike by issuing subpoenas against union leaders, raiding their homes, and threatening to arrest strikers.

The day after the November 2 U.S. elections, 60 agents from the FBI and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) raided the homes of five Independent Authentic Union (UIA) leaders, carting off personal papers, jewelry, money, and computer files.

“This is a raid to pressure us, to put pressure on the strike,” said UIA vice president Andrés Carrasquillo in a radio interview. “We are not going to yield,” he added. “And we are not going to end the strike. The strike will end when negotiations on the agreement are complete.” A

raid by FBI and IRS agents was also conducted on union offices October 20, with the government claiming it is investigating fraud in the management of a union-run health-care fund. When the bosses at the Water and Sewer Authority cut off payments to the fund unilaterally and set up a different fund, the workers went out on strike. Also at issue in the walkout are the grievance procedures and the number of union representatives allowed.

Washington has convened a federal grand jury, which has begun hearing testimony regarding alleged corruption in handling the union health-care fund.

In response to leaks about pending arrest orders against the UIA president and other union leaders, the federal treasury representative in Puerto Rico said the cops would take this step “when we are ready.” The mayor of the western city of San Germán joined in the strike-breaking efforts at the end of October, referring the names of three union members in the area to the FBI as suspects in the contamination of a

local reservoir with oil.

In a show of solidarity with the strikers, on November 13 the Movement of Puerto Rican Workers sponsored a 20-car caravan that traveled from Cataño to the offices in San Juan of the Water and Sewer Authority. There the president of the water workers union was joined by Víctor Villalba, president of the Puerto Rican Workers Federation (CTP), and Víctor Rodríguez, president of the Broad Front of Truck Drivers.

In addition to the water authority bosses and the federal authorities, other groups have launched attacks on the strike leadership. The newspaper of the Socialist Movement of Workers in Puerto Rico, *Bandera Roja*, for example, chose this moment to run an article by Ángel Quiles Vega publicly attacking the UIA leadership. While expressing support for the strike, the article demands an accounting by UIA officials for alleged misuse of funds, calling on them to come clean and accusing them of “undemocratic” and “bureaucratic” methods.